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Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER *and* MELVIN J. LASKY

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Herbert Nicholas

United Nations?

THE U.N. PERFECTLY EMBODIES in institutional form the tragic paradox of our age; it has become indispensable before it has become effective. And Dag Hammarskjöld's death displays the same paradox in personal terms; he was indispensable and yet the U.N. must find a way to carry on his work without him. If the U.N. were to collapse (as it may) there would still be no alternative (save, of course, war and anarchy) to constructing a second U.N., in all essentials the same. If the Secretary-Generalship, as Hammarskjöld understood it, were to die with him there would still be no alternative (save, of course, the progressive paralysation of the U.N.) to re-creating an office essentially the same and filling it with a Secretary-General who will make it work. This is not because the present U.N. is perfect or because Dag Hammarskjöld was all-wise. It is because only something basically like the U.N. will correspond to the facts of present-day international life and because only a Secretary-General with international loyalties and a power of initiative can mobilise it in crisis and make the most of its limited opportunities for growth. To exist at all it cannot depart very far from its present structure; to develop at all it requires the focus and drive which only a permanent and potent leader can give it.

It is doubtful, despite the tributes which Hammarskjöld's death has evoked, how far this is really understood in Britain. There is a widely diffused awareness (to which, incidentally, official comment has given very tepid and inadequate expression) that a great gap has been torn in the thin fabric of international order by his going. There is a keen appreciation of the tragic, indeed the deeply ironic, circumstances in which he met his death. But the personal element apart, there seems to be an utterly inadequate perception of why the particular set of values that Hammarskjöld stood for should be vital for the U.N. and for world peace.

From the beginning the U.N. has had a poor time of it in Britain. It has not been hated (not even at the time of Suez); it has simply been overlaid, heavily overlaid, in the country's interests and affections. Perhaps it was too much to expect it to succeed to the place once occupied by the League of Nations. In the family of nations, as in others, there can be only one first-born. Where the League was concerned we felt pride of parentage (even if we neglected the duties of parentage); its leaders were our leaders; for its shortcomings we were responsible; its fleeting moments of triumph were ours. It was European, it was Genevan, it was close, even cosy. It was as little foreign as was compatible with being international. It could be reported easily and cheaply; its deadlines were Fleet Street's. Above all, it found personification in popular heroes of Right and Left, in Henderson and Eden, as well as in those who rose above party, like Robert Cecil, and in scholar-prophets like Gilbert Murray and Zimmern. Not all this was pure gain. The *mystique* was not only exploited by calculating politicians, it was actually absorbed by some who thought they meant what they said. But at least it was a force in the nation's life at all levels, not a thing apart. It was part of the texture of politics and of the political

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conflicts of the 'twenties and 'thirties. It was not only news; it was closely followed and widely understood.

THE U.N., FOR BRITAIN, was the old League re-vamped by American hands. We were sceptical about some of the alleged improvements, but we were perfectly satisfied with all the main features. All the same, the predominant feeling was that this was an American creation—let them run it, and if they can justify their pride and enthusiasm in their first-born, well and good. Britain would invest loyalty, some cash, a few brains—but not drive or enthusiasm. What *was* important was to keep the U.S.A. interested and involved, and so the site in New York was gladly accepted despite all that it implied about the demotion of Europe and the end of quiet diplomacy. The decision was a correct one, but there were certain inescapable consequences; the U.N. became remote, its formative years spent behind that dollar curtain which shut North America off from British experience and observation. Newspapers that had covered Geneva in detail found the U.N. too expensive and its deadlines five hours too late to warrant comparable outlay on full-time correspondents and long cables.[1]

IN ANY CASE how much did the U.N. matter? The Foreign Ministers' Conference, the O.E.E.C., the Brussels Pact, N.A.T.O.—meetings of bodies such as these incorporated the verities of post-war international life as seen from London. Indeed in the stern mood of post-war realism there was even a feeling that to be too much interested in the U.N. was to succumb to the opiate of a previous, utopian generation. So the study of international relations reverted to the study of contemporary history, or at most, of the new regional growths in Europe or the North Atlantic. The vacancies left by the pioneering scholars of the inter-war years remained unfilled save where a new and impressive breed of students of international economics explored the one area where, it seemed, consumer satisfaction could truly be found.

On the political side there was little intellectual traffic between the U.N. and the universities; along one route, at least, that which ran to U.N.E.S.C.O., it was positively dangerous to be seen travelling. Officialdom contributed its quota to public unenlightenment by keeping to a minimum its disclosures of documents and material on any recent international enterprise or negotiation in which the United Kingdom was involved. The result was that the centre of academic as well as popular interest in the U.N. moved to the United States. There much excellent work was done, work from which we ought no doubt to have benefited by our access to a common language. In extenuation for our indifference it may be said that, for all its merits, it seldom overleapt the boundary walls of a specialist discipline or found a level of discourse equally acceptable on both sides of the Atlantic. This left the British public with no better categories for understanding what went on at the U.N. than those which were carried over from its thinking about the League or those purveyed for their own purposes by the Foreign Office or the press. Thus it was possible at the time of Suez for an elderly Gilbert Murray to arrest and confuse public opinion by arguing that the British and French governments "have chosen . . . the course of lesser evil. . . . When a fire breaks out it must be extinguished before it spreads."

The experience of Geneva in the 'thirties and, still more, the hard schooling in Grand Alliance diplomacy provided by the war, certainly protected the British public from succumbing to extravagant expectations about the new U.N. Even in our most wishful thinking we recognised that it was on the direct relations between Britain and the U.S.S.R. or between the Anglo-Americans and the U.S.S.R. that peace depended, not upon any self-activating entity at Lake Success. This protected us against the sharper disillusionment which befell American opinion when Russian vetoes began to fall like hailstones. Very properly we saw the stalemates in the Security Council as merely the reflection on the U.N. screen of the sharpening antipathies in the real world outside.

ALL THE SAME it is doubtful whether we understood the nature of the institution we had helped to create any better than the Americans

[1] And this was not only true of reporting from headquarters in New York. In December when the fighting broke out afresh in Katanga, newspapers appeared largely content to take their reports of it from Katangan sources inside Elizabethville, with results which were momentous for British popular and parliamentary opinion.

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did.[2] The logic of the veto was seldom grasped outside Whitehall. The illusion that the U.N. was an embodiment of the collective security principle died very hard. So much lip-service had been paid to the term, so little painful analysis had been made of its implications, that no one was willing to draw attention to the Charter's total inadequacy in this respect. The veto was both a reminder and a guarantee that no collective action could be taken in the event of the most catastrophic breaches of the peace, those by the Great Powers or their satellites. True, this left open the possibility of such action where no great power interest was involved, but for even this relatively insignificant type of outbreak no adequate machinery was provided by the Charter. The Charter did not go beyond a moral commitment to establish enforcement machinery:

> . . . the agreements [to make available forces to the Security Council] shall be negotiated as soon as possible on the initiative of the Security Council (Article 43)

—it did not itself set up any enforcement system. In fact, of course, the failure of the Military Staff Committee to agree on even the size and nature of the national contingents to be contributed, meant that even this limited objective was not realised. Even had agreement been reached, however, any action by such a force would have required the unanimous support of the Great Powers and could therefore only have been taken in cases where no conflict of interest or aspiration between Great Powers was involved. Or, to put it in contemporary terms, it would work only if all the Great Powers felt an equal interest in putting out any mere "brushfire" conflagrations—if any war anywhere were regarded as so potentially menacing as to invite the same kind of attention as cholera.

BUT WHAT ABOUT KOREA? Did this not prove that the U.N. could take collective action against an aggressor?

Such a claim was frequently made by British leaders and the immediate, positive response of the Organisation to its challenge was frequently contrasted, to its advantage, with the supine behaviour of the League over Manchuria and Ethiopia. But if one strips the Korean operation of its U.N. terminology its character emerges as an action taken by a coalition of sixteen member states under the leadership of a Great Power, the United States, who chanced to have a strategic reserve available close at hand, and who was willing to risk the hazard of involvement in a war 5,000 miles away because of a confidence derived from her overwhelming lead in the possession of a superweapon, the atom bomb. When the risks of deeper involvement mounted, when the prospect of open Chinese intervention and a consequent Soviet commitment became unpleasantly close, the fighting had to be wound up without the proper re-establishment of what the Charter calls "peace and security," still less of what the General Assembly resolution called a "unified, independent, and democratic government" for Korea. It is an uneasy truce watched over by American arms in a divided country that persists to this day.

Moreover, owing to the total hostility to the Korean "police operation" shown by the U.S.S.R. and its satellites, it was not possible to associate the U.N. with its military direction in any but the most nominal sense. The war was in effect conducted by the U.S. in greater or lesser degree of concert with its allies and with the U.N. involved only in the making of a limited number of major decisions such as the declaration that Communist China was guilty of aggression, the application to her of limited economic sanctions, and the arrangements for holding the abortive Geneva peace conference of 1954.

TO SAY THIS IS NOT to allege that there was anything bogus about the invocation of the U.N. label for the Korean operation or that it was in any way at odds with the Charter. Nor is it to belittle the practical value of the moral sanction which the U.N. auspices gave to the operation. Without the U.N. connection it is highly doubtful whether the Anglo-American action would have received the swift and strikingly unified support of the Commonwealth or of several other countries. (Paradoxically, too, without the existence of a sentiment in the General Assembly favouring a limited war and later a negotiated peace, it is doubtful whether the war could have been kept from spreading.) But valuable, and in a sense real, as the U.N. endorsement was, it would, of course, not have been available without the happy and

[2] See Inis Claude, "The United Nations and the Use of Force" in *International Conciliation*, March 1961, for an incisive analysis of this misconception.

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accidental absence of the U.S.S.R. from the Security Council and, it is even more important to remember, without the dubious propriety of the Kuomintang's representative occupying China's seat there.

THE BELIEF THAT, veto or no veto, the U.N. was a collective security organisation stimulated and in turn was stimulated by the passage of the justly celebrated *Uniting for Peace* Resolution. Designed to prevent a second Korean action being stymied by a U.S.S.R. which returned to the Security Council and *used* the veto, the Resolution provided, in the case of a Security Council deadlock, for the transfer of a dispute to the General Assembly. As such, it was held by the Russians to be illegal, and as such it certainly violated the original concept of a U.N. which would only act when there was Great Power unanimity. But whatever the purists and the Soviets might say, it was in keeping with the political trend inside the Organisation towards a greater use of the "popular chamber," the General Assembly. Since then it has been employed in 1956 over Suez and Hungary, in 1958 over Lebanon, and in 1960 over the Congo, and is now unquestionably an established piece of U.N. procedure.

This does not mean, however, that it has realised the "collective security" aspirations of its promoters. Far from it. The Resolution provided for the establishment of a Peace Observation Commission, which would keep a permanent U.N. eye on trouble-spots. It also asked members to maintain units within their armed forces which could be promptly made available to the U.N. in case of need. Finally it set up a Collective Measures Committee to oversee this development and co-ordinate members' efforts. But the Peace Observation Committee functioned only fleetingly and the Collective Measures Committee collected only vague and evasive responses; even the United States would make no firm pledge about what forces it would earmark for United Nations use. So there remained, at the end, only a procedure for transferring an appeal from an impotent Areopagus to a popular chamber, with the limitation always remaining under the Charter that that popular chamber, however large its majorities, can never *command* member states to act; it can only *recommend* that they should take joint action in defence of "peace and security."

IT TOOK THE FRUSTRATIONS and ragged endings of the Korean War to produce complete recognition of the U.N.'s incapacity as an instrument for collective security. Realism quickly gave birth to disillusion. There developed in Britain a far-too-ready disposition to assume that because the U.N. had failed in a role for which it was doubtfully intended, it should therefore be written off entirely. Since N.A.T.O. had emerged as an apparently effective reincarnation of the familiar balance of power alliance and constituted the West's operative shield against Soviet Communism, it was mistakenly assumed that only this (and the related economico-political institutions of the new Europe) were "real" and that what went on at Lake Success was window-dressing or worse. Sometimes a patronising exception would be made for the technical and welfare activities of the U.N. and especially of its related agencies. In line with the avowed post-war preference for "functional" internationalism, the erosion of sovereignty by technocratic burrowing, the achievements of F.A.O. and W.H.O. were accorded qualified respect, technical aid, especially after the adoption of the so-called "Expanded Programme" in 1949, began to gain increased attention, and the work of the economic surveying agencies, particularly E.C.E. as a hands-across-the-curtain device, commanded a good hearing. The I.L.O., in particular, enjoyed the peculiar esteem reserved for an organisation in which our island virtues made a good showing both before the footlights and behind the stage.

Running through this whole emphasis on the non-political side of the U.N. was a kind of Whitehall-ism, a belief that international agencies need only be taken seriously in so far as they display the kind of bureaucratic efficiency and produce the kind of tangible benefits that the civil servant equates with good government. Such a mentality had its own contribution to make to the development of international institutions—of impartiality, matter-of-factness, non-pomposity, conscientiousness. It had been incarnated in Britain's first gift to the League, Sir Eric Drummond, and it continued to exercise a valuable influence wherever, in the widely different world of the U.N., it could make itself heard and felt. But it lived by pretending that the political didn't exist, or else oughtn't to exist, and in its exaltation of the "functional" side of the U.N. it came near to debasing it to the level of an inefficient and

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under-financed service organisation, to be tolerated, or supported, on quasi-humanitarian grounds. Thus once again public attention was diverted from the effort of properly understanding what its political role was or might be, and in particular from realising that, for better or worse, this was the centre of its being.

Suez brought this phase to a sudden, painful end. The depth of our incomprehension was sharply revealed by the fact that the policy which led to the first British veto in the Council and the overwhelming British defeats in the Assembly was shaped and insisted on by the man who had been Britain's first Minister for League of Nations Affairs. Before we knew where we were we found ourselves being sentenced in a court which our efforts had largely built, our contributions maintained, our own flesh and blood staffed. We were brought up short by a U.N. which, whether we agreed with its ruling or not, was indubitably acting as a political force. No doubt it was true that if the United States had reacted differently, the resolutions and votes in the Security Council and Assembly would have been different. No doubt it was true that the force of American displeasure was the decisive factor in our reluctant change of front. This did not alter the fact that it was through the U.N. that American pressure was principally exercised and that it was as a result of the use of the U.N. that France and Britain were so quickly and totally isolated, sustained in the Security Council by no votes but their own, and enjoying in the General Assembly the support only of Australia, New Zealand, and Israel.

In face of this searing experience the disposition to write off the political potency of the U.N. could not be maintained. In its place there sprouted the comforting doctrine of the Double Standard. According to this, U.N. justice was not only blind; it also used two standards, one for the West and the other for the East, one for democracies who had public consciences and public opinion and the other for Communist dictatorships who had neither. Suez thus ended in Anglo-French withdrawal and U.N.E.F., Hungary in Soviet occupation and a refusal to admit any U.N. representative across its borders. But of course the verdict of the U.N. had been at least as emphatic in one case as in the other. On the Hungarian issue it denounced Soviet "armed intervention," described it as a violation of the Charter, and called for withdrawal without delay. Over the allied action in Suez it wasted, in fact, no harsh epithets, contenting itself with calling for our immediate cease-fire and subsequent withdrawal of troops. In neither case did the U.N., as such, try and resort to force to execute its verdicts. The moral pressure of disapproval was applied in each case; any additional pressures which France and Britain sustained over oil supplies, a run on sterling and the like, were entirely extra-U.N. The U.N. Expeditionary Force was not, of course, in any sense a policeman enforcing the law. It was a buffer between opposing fighting forces, actually assisting a bloodless Anglo-French evacuation and providing certain guarantees for property and security, as well as saving a considerable amount of face. And of course the basic reason why Britain and France obeyed the Assembly resolutions and the U.S.S.R. did not is that they realised their interests in Suez not to be worth the opprobrium which flouting the U.N. would involve, while the U.S.S.R., whether rightly or not, judged its interests in Hungary to be worth a high price in terms of world esteem.

Or, restating it in terms of the original power structure of the U.N., two Great Powers, Britain and France, were demonstrated by Suez not to be Great Powers at all, being unwilling, even after their use of their vetoes, to persist in opposition to their ally, the U.S.A., and in effect thus acquiescing in its Great Power leadership, while the U.S.S.R. never had to move from the position assumed when it used its veto over Hungary, namely, that it was a Great Power and that U.N. majorities could not coerce it.

What Suez and Hungary thus demonstrated afresh was that the U.N. was not a collective security agency, that it could not take any but recommendatory stands on issues involving a clash between Russia and the West, but that where other issues were concerned and where enforcement was not called for it was a political, *i.e.* a moral force that had to be reckoned with. Suez also revealed something else. It brought the Secretary-General to the centre of the world stage.

The most original feature of the U.N. Charter, its most conspicuous break with the provisions of the League Covenant, was the investiture of the Secretary-General

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with a specifically political role. He is not the mere administrative head of the Secretariat. He has a power, even an obligation, to initiate action when he thinks peace and security may be threatened. He is a diplomat in his own right, empowered to deal on a basis of equality with the representatives of all member states. Like a member state he can use the organs of the U.N. as a forum for his views. Not least, he can personify the U.N., embodying in the eyes of the world the principles and ideals of the Charter.

The Americans, it would seem, were the principal promoters at San Francisco of this concept of a Secretary-General with an independent political role, a projection on to the international screen of their domestic preference for an executive leader with a mandate of his own which has not been filtered through a parliamentary assembly. Whatever the origin, the idea won acceptance. It also nearly wrecked itself, in the hands of the first incumbent, Trygve Lie.

Lie failed to recognise that every power which the Charter gives to the Secretary-General is set about with limitations, unwritten but inexorable because they flow from the nature of his role as the servant of a world organisation of sovereign states. He can initiate action, but only if member states will support his initiatives. He can conduct diplomacy and propagate doctrine, but the diplomacy must serve no partial interest and the doctrine must be universally applicable. He can and should personify the U.N. totality but he must accept the corollary, and be prepared to stand alone, with no constituency of his own. Finally, in serving the Charter he has also be the servant of member states whose own observance of their U.N. obligation is unreliable and intermittent. He has become a politician without ceasing to be a civil servant, he is a Pope without a church, a conscience expected to establish justice but only on the explicit understanding that the heavens are not made to fall in the process.

No one can be judged too harshly for failing in such an enterprise and Trygve Lie deserves credit for certain stands that served the Organisation well at critical moments, as at the time of North Korean aggression in 1950. But his exploitation of the potentialities of his office was too crude, his diplomacy too unskilled, his sense of timing too erratic, his capacity to build and maintain a united, confident, secretariat team altogether too inadequate. The immediate effect of his seven-year service was to induce the appointment of a successor presumed to be cast in an opposite mould, a Nordic Eric Drummond.

Dag Hammarskjöld's emergence as a Secretary-General fully exploiting all the possibilities of his role came as a surprise. In retrospect we can surmise that something of this dynamism was latent in him from the start, concealed only by his studiously subdued style and colour. But what is equally evident is that circumstances at the U.N. combined to thrust such a role at him and that the price of his rejection of it would have been the crippling of the Organisation and the aggravation, with consequences one can only surmise, of a series of grave diplomatic crises. The final cause of his emergence as a world figure was that the U.N. needed him as such.

THE STAGES IN THE EVOLUTION of Dag Hammarskjöld's Secretary-Generalship are familiar enough.[3] They began with his mission to China in 1955 that resulted in the release of the imprisoned American airmen. A prolonged bout of Middle East diplomacy culminated in 1956–57 in his crucial role as organiser and manager of the U.N. Expeditionary Force in Egypt. In 1957 he was triumphantly re-elected for a second term with the endorsements of all the power blocs of the U.N. In 1958 when the Security Council was deadlocked over the crisis in Lebanon and Jordan, Hammarskjöld set about strengthening the U.N. observer group in Lebanon although the U.S.S.R. had just vetoed a Japanese proposal to the same effect. In 1959 and 1960, first by a personal visit and then by the device of leaving technical aid consultants behind, he maintained a U.N. "presence" in Laos in face of steady Soviet disapproval. In 1960 before the Congo mutiny broke out he established, on his own initiative, a technical assistance office there; when the Congo government asked for military assistance it was he who brought the request to the Security Council, strongly recommending the dispatch of a U.N. force, stipulating that it should not include Great Power contingents and should in the first place use African troops, identifying the Belgian forces as a cause of tension and

[3] Though the historians have not yet caught up with the headlines, a useful assessment of this evolution can be found in M. Virtally's *Le Rôle Politique du Secrétaire Générale* in "L'Annuaire Français de Droit International," IV, 1958.

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desiring their withdrawal, and above all, insisting on the need for haste both in obtaining a decision from the Security Council and in getting the force despatched and established.

In all these respects the Security Council endorsed his recommendations. It continued to support him until Soviet opposition forced the transfer of the issue to the General Assembly. In the Assembly he received the continuing mandate he required by a resounding vote of 70 to 0, despite bitter Soviet hostility. But as confusion deepened in the Congo the lines of force, even in the General Assembly, became a meaningless tangle after the recognition of Kasavubu in November. When no resolution could secure the requisite majority for passage Hammarskjöld then asserted the continuing responsibility of the Secretariat in what was, for all its understatements, perhaps the most striking affirmation of the rights and duties of his office.

"Naturally," he said, "the operation will continue under the previous decision."

From this high-water mark there was no retreat. For all the mounting violence of Soviet criticism the Secretary-General did not fail to get the authorisation he needed, after Lumumba's death, permitting the U.N. command in the Congo to "use force, if necessary, in the last resort" to prevent civil war.

THESE ENLARGEMENTS of power which the Secretary-Generalship acquired in the nine years of Hammarskjöld's incumbency are of two kinds. They are those which one or other organ of the U.N. has explicitly conferred upon him—the discretionary authority that a political sovereign gives to a trusted but subordinate executive. Such were the broad authorisations the General Assembly gave at the time of Suez—*e.g.* to take "such administrative measures as may be necessary"[4]—or the comparable resolution of the emergency Assembly over Lebanon, to make

> such practicable arrangements as would help in upholding the purposes and principles of the Charter . . . and thereby facilitate the early withdrawal of foreign troops.

Such wide powers are conferred, in some instances, because the Security Council and the General Assembly are both equally incapable of discharging the executive tasks involved, but also, as is perfectly evident on a great many occasions, because neither the Council nor the Assembly can be more precise or explicit about what they want done lest the thin bonds of collective agreement snap under the strain. So, where invention flagged or prudence called a halt, the next step frequently took the form of "Leave it to Dag."

The other enlargements of the Secretary-General's powers have been of a different order. They have been assertions made by him, based upon his own rights and duties under the Charter. Such were his actions in strengthening the observer group in Lebanon or maintaining a U.N. "presence" in Laos. Such was his initiative in the very first stage of the Congo crisis and later in the calm maintenance of his course in face of the dual deadlocks of Council and Assembly. Wherever possible Hammarskjöld sought and obtained "parliamentary" authority for whatever he did, so that many of what were in effect his personal initiatives appeared in public draped in the respectability of U.N. resolutions. But he never concealed his right and obligation to act without the guidance of Council or Assembly,

> should this appear necessary [as he said] in order to help in filling any vacuum which may appear in the systems which the Charter and traditional diplomacy provide for the maintenance of peace and security.

Indeed his speeches and writings are a storehouse of argument and evidence for the role of the Secretary-General as a servant not merely of the debating bodies of the U.N. but of the wider world constituency and the greater cause, peace and security, which they imperfectly represent.[5] He was not deterred in the execution of this role by the knowledge that it would bring him into conflict even with a Great Power member. This happened with Britain and France over Suez; it happened repeatedly with the U.S.S.R. and led, of course, to the open breach of a year ago and the Soviet demand for his resignation and replacement by a "troika."

THERE ARE THOSE (other than the Russians) who would argue the essential impropriety of this second category of the Secretary-General's power, agreeing (though possibly *sotto voce*) with Mr. Khrushchev that though there may be

[4] *Cf.* the almost identical wording of the 1st Security Council resolution on the Congo of July 14, "to take the necessary steps . . . to provide . . . military assistance."

[5] See, for example, his lecture at Oxford last May, *"The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact"* (O.U.P., 1961).

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neutral nations there are no neutral men, and who consequently would seek to restrict the Secretary-General's powers to the first category I have listed, those which he derives from the authority of the Council or the Assembly. "Mr. Hammarskjöld," they would say, "lived dangerously. True, he pulled it off, but a lesser man or a less established figure could not be safely entrusted with an equivalent range of discretion."

Yet the fact is that, though the sources of his two types of power were different, his authority, in either case, derived its legitimacy and its political value from the same set of circumstances. These are so obvious that one apologises for stating them, but their relevance in the U.N. context is repeatedly overlooked.

IF ONE LOOKS BACK over the areas of conflict in which the U.N. has intervened since Korea it is apparent that none of them is at the centre of the East-West cold war.

Wisely, the U.N., and particularly the Secretary-General, has not attempted to insert itself into the direct confrontation of the two rival blocs, of N.A.T.O. and the Warsaw Pact. It has not aspired to control summit meetings or to settle Berlin—or even Quemoy and Matsu. The areas in which it has operated, with varying success, have been those on the fringe of the main wrestling match, where other elements contribute to the local conflicts and the Great Powers, though involved, do not feel that every gain or set-back is, for them, a direct matter of life or death. The Middle East, *par excellence*, has been such a U.N. area. Africa, almost to the same degree. Much of Asia, especially where the conflicts, like those of India and Pakistan, have been predominantly intra-continental. The conflicts that develop in these areas hold the gravest potentialities for world peace because if they spread the cold war will grow hot at their touch, but fortunately they do not themselves immediately involve the vital interests of the super-sensitive, atom-happy Great Powers.

This is what makes the processes of U.N. mediation, intervention, even ultimately perhaps, as in the Congo, coercion possible. The frozen posture of East and West which seems to inhibit all movement in the heartland of the cold war has not yet spread here. But of course, it can spread in a twinkling, as Russian rocket diplomacy over Suez, or the persistent Soviet threats to offer direct aid to the Congo testify. And the menace of such intervention is far from adequately met by counter-threats—"If you intervene, we will"—since this only enthrones the evil it seeks to prevent. The only weapon at our disposal here is the U.N. And, since Great Power initiatives are suspect—not only by each side but by the "uncommitted" denizens of the areas involved, the only initiative possible is, time and time again, the Secretary-General's. Whether he exercises it entirely *sua sponte* or via a delegation of authority from the Security Council or the General Assembly is consequently of little moment. The reason in each case will be the same, namely that in the present East-West deadlock, he often represents the only element of movement left and the only prospect of keeping the cold war from taking over Afro-Asia (and perhaps Latin America too). Though Congo confusion, tireless propaganda, and persistent misrepresentation have overlaid the fact, it is Dag Hammarskjöld we have to thank that Russian and American "volunteers" are not at this moment slugging it out in the jungles of the Congo.

IF I AM RIGHT IN CONTENDING that it is these areas of the "uncommitted" or "non-aligned" or "anti-colonialists" or "Afro-Asians," as you prefer, that give the U.N. its greatest scope, then not only should the U.N.'s supporters hold fast to the Hammarskjöldian concept of the Secretary-Generalship, but they should also welcome the increased voice of these regions in the Organisation. Hammarskjöld realised the integral connection between the two; when the Russians demanded his resignation in October, 1960, to replace him by "an arrangement" which, as he said, "would make it impossible to maintain an effective executive," he declined to comply because of the responsibility he had towards the weaker member states.

> It is not the Soviet Union or, indeed, any other big powers who need the United Nations for their protection; it is all the others. In this sense the Organisation is first of all *their* Organisation. . . . I shall remain in my post . . . as long as *they* wish me to do so.

Put in the narrower perspective of "the West's" interests, it is the membership of these states in the U.N., and, as a corollary, their participation in the tasks (*e.g.* the Congo force) of the Organisation as well as in the benefits (*e.g.* technical aid) that provide the strongest guarantees that their "non-alignment" will not end in their being swept into the Communist embrace. Useless to allege—or indeed to deny—

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that they introduce elements of unpredictability, uncertainty, irresponsibility, even, upon occasion, sheer incomprehension, into the workings of the U.N. But this is because these elements exist in the real world to which we and they belong. The temptation to exclude them from the U.N. is the temptation to preserve a neat and cosy model at the price of distorting what reality is like. But it is also true that the votes they cast and the speeches they will untiringly make will be more or less responsible according as they have more or less faith in the impartiality and courage of the executive head of the Organisation. Dag Hammarskjöld had to suffer much at the hands of those he tried to help but if the record of his tenure proves anything it proves this. In the present "twilight of colonialism" we shall never see the independent states of Africa line up behind the leadership of a European Great Power as the Latin-Americans did behind the United States. The one chance of retaining their support for some sort of orderly and peaceful development in international relations, rather than being seduced by Communism or relapsing into anarchy, lies in the leadership of a U.N. Secretary-General they can trust—though, of course, he in turn will need all the support the Western Powers can give him.

THIS IS WHAT the unliquidated legacy of colonialism makes it hard for Britain to understand. (Contemplating the Government's recent actions over Katanga one is almost tempted to say "impossible.") The issue is repeatedly presented in terms of an impossible "either-or"—of an ideally enlightened, evolutionary and pacific policy such as a colonialist power operating the most altruistic form of trusteeship might conceivably aspire to (but has in fact never sustained for very long), *versus* a muddled, incompetent, ill-informed, inexperienced, partisan and polyglot U.N. operation. With an astonishing indifference to the West's true interests, the real alternatives are persistently ignored. They are, of course, quite simply either a U.N.-sponsored policy, necessarily largely Afro-Asian manned, and openly aimed at fostering African nationalism and independence, or else a free-for-all with an absolute certainty of Soviet intrusion on a massive scale and a near certainty of conflict quickly developing from civil strife to inter-African war and finally to inter-continental war.

With one part of itself the Government accepts the first alternative—how else explain the support of U.N. Congo resolutions and the (so far) continued contributions to O.N.U.C.? But when this course runs into inevitable difficulties and offends allied susceptibilities, or economic interests with influential spokesmen, there is virtually no limit to the back-tracking of which the Government is capable. Pressure applied locally on U.N. officials, resistance to strengthening of the U.N. mandate, hints of withdrawal of financial support, demands for cease-fires which would leave U.N. forces exposed in positions of danger and constant harassment—all this and more have marked British policy. In resisting such a course even the Opposition has been curiously half-hearted and ineffective, just as public opinion in general has displayed a widespread gullibility. The Congo operation, from first to last, has been messy and confusing; ignorance about the U.N.'s character and functions has encouraged a very natural aversion to seeing it resort to force; finally, the death of Hammarskjöld has removed the only U.N. figure whom the public were willing to trust even when appearances might be against him.

WHAT MAKES THIS DISMAL RECORD the more astonishing is that it occurs at a time when it is not only the future of the Congo operation but the future of the U.N. itself that is at stake. It might have been thought that any member state which did not want to see the Organisation founder would snatch at the second chance which U Thant's election provided. Here was a near miracle—the halting of the *troika* and the election, without strings, of a single successor to Hammarskjöld. It might seem an inescapable obligation, in such a situation, to strengthen the new Secretary-General's hand by every means at the Government's disposal, and, initially at least, to give him the benefit of every doubt. In fact one will search official British pronouncements in vain for any word of encouragement or defence of his efforts.

Yet on even the narrowest interpretation of the West's interests, U Thant desperately needs to build up some little capital of prestige of the kind that only success can give, against the next Russian assault on his office and his authority. This is absolutely certain to come. The Russian acceptance of his election, whatever its motive, certainly does not imply any

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acquiescence in the international loyalties of the Secretary-General and his staff. On the contrary; it comes at a time when they have launched new offensives at all levels of the Secretariat. In their eyes the Secretariat ought to be (indeed on good Marxist principles cannot avoid being) a set of officials whose primary loyalty is to their national governments even though they happen to be on the U.N. payroll. This has been a consistently held Soviet view from the beginning, and has been exemplified in their firm refusal to allow the Secretariat to recruit Soviet citizens directly; all appointments have to be cleared with the government of the U.S.S.R. So long as the Soviets were relatively indifferent about claiming the number of Secretarial posts that their U.N. contribution entitled them to, the consequences of this were not too serious; they insisted, of course, on having an Assistant Secretary but were relatively content to see him put in charge of Security Council affairs where his scope for mischief was limited.

Now, however, that Mr. Khrushchev has "discovered" the U.N., there is a new Russian determination to secure every footing, every hand-hold even, that the organisation affords for the exercise of their influence. As vacancies occur, the Russians can be counted on to demand their full quota of places on the Secretariat, at all levels and in all departments. Their decision to participate in technical aid gave them an entering wedge which they are pressing home for all they are worth; they contribute in non-convertible roubles and so secure the maximum U.N. credit compatible with the maximum freedom of operation; they do not give much money, but Moscow plays host to the largest number of trainees. Their boycott of U.N.E.F. and the Congo force as "illegal" has given them an excuse for refusing to contribute a penny towards the expenses of these costly operations. This is bad enough, both practically and morally. The real time for Western worries, however, will come when Russia does contribute to operations of this sort and goes on to insist on a proportionate voice in their conduct; such a time may not be far away.

What holds for the U.S.S.R. holds, of course, for the Soviet satellites. It also holds for Communist China. No one supposes that her exclusion from the U.N. can be very much longer delayed, despite the December vote, but it should never be forgotten that her admission will wreak as much havoc in the functioning of the organisation as she can get away with. It will be surprising if China's representatives in the Secretariat do not prove twice as subtle, insinuating, and destructive as the mainly taciturn and withdrawn Soviets. The Chinese are not likely to be content with being secretariat passengers with heavy off-duty duties like espionage; they will almost certainly aspire to posts of leadership and control. The pressures which they can mount, in alliance with other Communist powers, will be formidable. If the U.N. is not equipped now to meet this sort of challenge it will go down before them.

No AWARENESS OF THIS seems to exist in the British Government at present. Either that, or, in a deliberate attempt to placate other elements —the Welenskys in the Commonwealth or the De Gaulles in the Common Market—the Government has decided to curb the U.N.'s activities in the colonialist and ex-colonialist field. If so, it is likely to spread a wider ruin than it intends. The truth is that the countries who gave birth to the U.N. and endowed it with its dynamic principle, a civil service with international loyalties, cannot any longer treat it as a mere tool of their national policies. Their offspring now, as always, has a moral claim on them for sympathy, loyal leadership, and resolute support. But if it does not get them it is no longer certain that, like the League, it will be content to fade and die amidst the ruins of liberal hopes. There is a considerable likelihood that, in such an event, it will survive, succoured by other hands and inspired by other leadership, to plague the parents who neglected it.

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Melvin J. Lasky

Africa for Beginners

A Traveller's Notebook (III)

"Look! . . . Here it comes, the darkness you were clamouring for. . . . To you, black was the colour of priests and undertakers and orphans. But everything is changing. Whatever is gentle and kind and good will be black. Milk will be black, sugar, rice, the sky, doves, hope, will be black. So will the opera to which we shall go, blacks that we are, in black Rolls Royces to hail black kings, to hear brass bands, beneath chandeliers of black crystal. . . ."

JEAN GENET, LES NEGRES

THE VERY NAME of the country, given by the mediæval Muslim geographers as *Bilad al-Sudan*, "the land of the Blacks," raises the question: what's the colour of black? Here in Khartoum, at least (although in the south, of course, it's different) one sees only browns. Have the complexions changed, or has nobody for a thousand years been able to see the colour for the pigmentation? Herodotus spoke of some Indians as being "white like the Egyptians." What was the real hue of Othello, that "lusty Moor" and "old black ram"—or of Aaron ("Zounds, ye whore! is black so base a hue?") whom Shakespeare has cry out:

Coal-black is better than another hue,
In that it scorns to bear another hue;
For all the water in the ocean
Can never turn the swan's black legs to white,
Although she lave them hourly in the flood. . . .

Why black, always black? One student of racial prejudice among the Europeans has suggested that

> . . . it may be because they have had the most reason to fear the dark. The long winter nights have surely left a mark on our language and thought; we speak of dark deeds and black moods, of wickedness as black as hell, while angels are white and bright and in all our metaphor white stands for innocence and purity. The devil was black to people who had never seen a brown skin. And when a brown skin was seen for the first time, the first associations were with dirt and defecation and with all the metaphors associating darkness with evil and fear.

But even in Shakespeare's time there was a more discriminating sense of hue and teint. John Pory (a friend of Richard Hakluyt) translated Leo Africanus' *Travels* in 1600, and observed that "the Africans or Moores, properly so-called, are of two kinds, namely white or tawnie Moores, and Negros or blacke Moores. . . ."

Did the Africans themselves have so much trouble with the human palette? Among the "heathen cannibals" whom Ibn Batuta encountered in his 14th-century travels in Africa, a *qádi*, a white man, was unmistakable for he was not "ripe"—"The reason why the heathens did not eat him was that he was white, for they say that the white is indigestible. . . ." Writing of the attitude of the Foulahs of Bondou towards the Mandingoes, Mungo Park noted that "they evidently consider all the Negro natives as their inferiors; and when talking of different nations, always rank themselves among the white people. . . ." The anthropologists go on to tell us that white in Africa is "a favourite colour" and often is considered sacred—Murungu, who is the Supreme God of the Kikuyu of Kenya, is called "Possessor of Whiteness." (But the chroniclers of the Omdurman slave-market record that black skins were preferred to copper-coloured.) Major Bowdich tells the story of the complications in painting the portrait of the King of Ashanti until His Majesty confided, in

This is the concluding article in the series which began in the July ENCOUNTER *and was continued in the September number.*

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a low whisper, his true wish, namely, "to be painted white. . . ."

But what's the colour of white? I remember hearing from Hindus that it was the colour of cold, of alcoholism, of cruelty, of ghostliness, of a disfiguring leprous paleness. It was also the colour of murder for the Christian converts of San Domingo who (as Heine tells the story) took racial revenge in the name of the Lord because "it was the whites who crucified Christ!" And at least at one moment of history, I am relieved to know, it was taken to be the colour of stupidity, of mental and physical sluggishness. An Arab writer records the following opinion by a learned 8th-century Toledan judge on the subject of Europeans:

> . . . their temperaments have become cold and their humours rude, while their bodies have become large, their complexion light and their hair long. They lack withal sharpness of wit and penetration of intellect, while stupidity and folly prevail among them. . . .

We need, it would seem, a new *Farbenlehre*, although Goethe himself is not quite irrelevant for he did argue on behalf of a natural harmony of the colours and that darkness was a creative force in its own right. The real clinical question for a world hysterically blinded by whiteness and blackness is whether any of the races can escape from these patterns of "neurotic ambivalence" and move towards some stable sense of the skin-clad self. I am encouraged by a passage in Marco Polo's *Travels*, describing his impressions in India in the year 1293:

> . . . In this province [in the South] the natives, although black, are not born of so deep a dye as they afterwards attain by artificial means, esteeming blackness the perfection of beauty. For this purpose, three times every day, they rub the children over with oil of sesame. The images of their deities they represent black, but the devil they paint white, and assert that all the demons are of that colour. . . .

A Letter

DEAR M.—The evidence that the country is an old-fashioned military dictatorship is slight and casual but unmistakable. At the airport one is given an official little booklet and under the blurry replica of the Sudanese colours one reads: "The National Flag is rectangular in shape, its width is half its length and it consists of three equal horizontal rectangles, its colours from top to bottom are blue, yellow, and green, respectively." In the lavatory there is a cleanly-framed document which proclaims the precise *"Inventory of Furniture, Utensils, and Office Equipment Held on Charge,"* and it includes, in impeccable order, Mirror (1), Basin, washing (1), Soap Container (1), Urine Stand (3), and Towel Hanger (1). . . . At the Ministry of Interior one learns that the so-called Revolution Government

> secured the people from the evils of party politics and directed their efforts and interests from abominable factional strifes and hero worship, towards more fruitful aspects of public service. . . . The people's faith in the Revolution and its leaders enabled the authorities to carry out their obligations in keeping public peace without resort to harsh measures affecting the liberty of the individual except in a few justifiable cases. . . .

And that

> The Revolution Government has turned the wheel of progress, stabilised the financial situation in a short time, and realised what the people could only dream of realising in generations to come.

And that the Security Section, which "is considered to be one of the strongest pillars contributing to the peaceful settlement of the country," has been pleased to increase the Police Force.

Who could fail to deduce that this is not "intelligence, human" or "intelligence, animal," but (characteristically, hopelessly) "intelligence, military" at work? I walk past an open door in a Khartoum public building (unglazed sand-brown bricks) and catch a glimpse of a session of Sudanese tribesmen sitting around an empty glistening conference table, trying to confer with a uniformed, stiff-backed major-general, seated under a photograph of a lieutenant-general. This is a small-time provincial military government, trying to run a country "by the numbers" in the spirit of some outdated training manual.

DOES IT HAVE, can it have, any "ideas"? Well, Kemal had a large conception; and the Meiji had a vision of a new national future; but these are general officers of the old school trying to keep up with a world which talks of economic plans and nationalist slogans and not, apparently, having the minds or the emotions for either. But they can be ruthless, of course, and a year ago they shot seven young officers dead: End of Revolt. A few months ago they rounded up almost everybody in Khartoum (with the exception of the Mahdi) around whom independent groups could gather: End of Opposition. General Abboud's picture is almost everywhere,

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but rather in an Arabo-Bonapartist style than in the 20th-century manner of *Fuehrerprinzip* or *Vozhd*. In most everyday respects the military dictatorship would seem to be fairly mild and slow-moving. It has no political party or social cause but having picked up the catchwords of "progress" and "positive neutralism" it goes along with Arab or African neighbours, Nasser or Nkrumah, on excursions into rhetorical militancy.

At moments during my days here (sandy, gritty: one sees the Nile, but feels only the desert) I had the impression of a "pre-revolutionary situation." Among the dissenters there are (1) the Political Class. These are the nationalist-independence fighters of all stripes who feel cheated of power and responsibility. It was not really a *coup* which gave the Generals control; they were invited in by a short-sighted political manœuvre, but now of course they are nicely ensconced in power and won't move easily. Most civilian political leaders seem to be unhappy about the situation and are waiting an opportunity to do something. "The sands are running out," somebody said to me, in what seemed at the time to be the world's most inapposite metaphor. (2) The Civil Service. They are not usually very political at all ("good British training," a general said), but the régime has been taking liberties with appointments, dismissals, tenure, pensions, etc., and them's fighting words for any man "on seat." (3) The Trade Unionists. The organisation of the urban workers had, in the past, surprising strength; thriving here now, as always in a forbidden covert underground atmosphere, have been the Communists. (4) The Students. The Government has been making a number of clumsy moves to undermine the oppositional spirit at the University, and this has only aggravated the natural conflict. (5) Many major social and religious representatives....

To BE SURE, the old parliamentary régime was desperately unstable, and I find it difficult to imagine that the new one will have learned so much from the past as to maintain itself more solidly. One can only hope so. But what does strike one forcibly in such areas is that the British set up "proper foundations" in most fields: from administration to education and economics. What was omitted (and necessarily so: the reasons are obvious) were Political Parties. They could teach them how to run a ministry or an irrigation scheme or an arts faculty—but not how to organise an effective political movement. Not that the Conservative or Labour machines are immortal shining models; but they are something. Most of these parties are nothing, and are blown away by the first real winds of strong personality and authoritarian leadership. Will the Sudan, then, move in the next period from an old-fashioned dictatorship of the right to a new-fashioned dictatorship of the left? The models for this are there—Nasser to the North, Nkrumah to the West. When things fall apart, will there be a democratic centre?

Diary

A MORNING along the Nile where the sight of a creaking *saquia* water-wheel—and an old sailor nearby, chipping out a primitive river-boat like the first man—should have kept me involved in the Year One, but on to Omdurman and the trail of the 19th century. The Mahdi's tomb looks sturdy enough now: its bombardment by Kitchener had cruelly proved that it was not "indestructible," and also that two could play at head-hunting. Gordon's head had been cut off and brought to Omdurman in a handkerchief to be shown to the Mahdi; now the body of the Mahdi was dug up and tossed into the Nile, but his head was severed and taken by Kitchener as a trophy of war. (According to Moorehead, "he appears to have had the notion that he might have used the skull for an inkstand or a drinking cup, or alternatively that it might have been forwarded as a curiosity to the Royal College of Surgeons in London....") The Khalifa's old house still looks fairly empty, and small wonder: Kitchener had written to Wingate, "Loot like blazes, I want any quantity of marble stairs, marble pavings, iron railings, looking-glasses and fittings; doors, windows, furniture of all sorts...." In good turn, tit for tat, there is in the garden an old military vehicle of Wingate, and on the walls a few rusty rifles which had been gathered from the battle-field. Under the "PLAN OF BATTLE OF OMDURMAN, 2 SEPTEMBER 1898" the handwritten statistics make their quiet propaganda: *British & Egyptian Army Losses, 48 Killed—Dervish Army, 9,700 Killed.* And the Khalifa's own drinking cup, made of rhinoceros horn, offers its own explanation of defeat, for it was supposed to offer magical protection if the horn was cut from the living animal (who had to be wounded, trussed up, and de-horned before death). In the Museum there are a few mementos

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of the intruders and infidels. A few fragments from Gordon's *Journal*: "Then I began, and told him [Ismail] all; and then he gave me the Sudan, and I leave on Saturday morning...." A text from Churchill: "The Pasha was vile, but indispensable...." A photostat of a letter from Queen Victoria to Gordon's sister: "*How* shall I write to you, or how shall I attempt to express *what I feel*. To *think* of your dear, noble, heroic Brother, who served his Country and his Queen so truly, so heroically, with a self-sacrifice so edifying to the World, not having been rescued. That the promises of support were not fulfilled —which I so frequently and so constantly pressed on those who asked him to go—is to me *grief inexpressible!*...." In his own Journal, Gordon used to look up relevant passages in Herodotus and paste them in. In my own I feel moved to paste the following, a proclamation of the Mahdi, copied from an Omdurman wall:

> Let all show penitence before God, and abandon all bad and forbidden habits, such as the degrading acts of the flesh, the use of wine and tobacco, lying, bearing false witness, disobedience to parents, brigandage, the non-restitution of goods to others, the clapping of hands, dancing, improper signs of the eyes, tears and lamentations at the bed of the dead, slanderous language, calumny, and the company of strange women. Clothe your women in a decent way, and let them be careful not to speak to unknown persons. All those who do not pay attention to these principles disobey God and His Prophet and they shall be punished in accordance with the law.
>
> Say your prayers at the prescribed hours....
>
> Adore God, and hate not each other, but assist each other to do good.

On the way out I saw two empty pedestals and asked the museum guide about them. He says Kitchener and Gordon once stood there. I ask what happened to the statues. He shrugs his shoulders and says he doesn't know.

AT LUNCH I LISTENED to a likeable Minister read a prepared speech full of the phraseology of rapid economic growth and incremented national product. I noted only a momentary stylistic lapse into an "old Sudanese proverb" (as a metaphor, I suppose, for this ancient land's poverty): "A dead tree casts a long shadow...." When I repeat it to Ahmed Ali he loses himself endlessly in stories of the land's long shadows, of which I find my notes include only the following:

In a Northern village, very far from the junction of the White and Blue Nile, a visiting inspector came and went but left behind his shaving mirror. A villager found it and when he looked into it was astonished to see his beloved and late lamented father. He returned with his father to his little private hut and, evenings, with the mirror mounted on the flimsy wall, he would talk to his father. In the next hut his wife would hear the whispers and grew increasingly suspicious. A tension mounted. One day she ventured secretly to enter her husband's hut and there she saw the mirror and looked into it and found the girl she suspected all the time was there. She went immediately to the local court and asked for a divorce. The judge listened to both and did grant a divorce, but the grounds for the court's decision was that the wife had done a forbidden thing by entering her husband's hut.

IN THE EVENING, to an elegant party in a splendid house (and there in the luxuriant garden I felt, for the first time, that I had escaped the Sahara). A senior foreign diplomat was complaining about his inability to get his children into the swimming pool of the British Club. A young Sudanese was explaining that he did not consider himself really either an African or an

1. Daily News. 2. Times. 3. Standard. 4. Pall Mall Gazette

A Sketch from Gordon's Journal

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Arab but something quite different and, no doubt (this, with a smile), something superior.[1] A university professor spoke bitterly about the discrimination against the students from the South, "and just because they are blacker...." I provoke a short-lived discussion on the causes and consequences of "Pharaonic circumcision," and a young doctor concludes it pleasantly with a promise to send me in the morning all the literature I would need to know on the subject of clitoridectomy. (But it never arrived.) A foreign journalist is scornful of the whole theme of the Sudan in African power-politics and reminds everybody that the Romans never occupied the Sudan although Nero sent an officer to report whether it was worth conquering. (Apparently he returned and said no.) A pretty young dancer tells me that she is on her way to China the next day in order to be "culturally exchanged." A cynical old expatriate argues that the only real moment of national danger will come when the Southern helots who function as bucket-men become politically organised, for a three-day general strike in the collection of latrine buckets would paralyse the capital....

Towards midnight we find ourselves in a suburban brothel drinking German beer with beautiful Ethiopian girls, listening drowsily to endless belly-dancing music from Radio Cairo.

The Mahdi

I ARRIVED A FEW MINUTES too early at the Mahdi's palace and didn't quite know what to do with myself as it was point six and everybody was in the garden, prostrating themselves in prayer towards Mecca. When I emerged from hiding, I was received on the marbled verandah, and the Mahdi (grandson of the first Mahdi, conqueror of General Gordon at Khartoum) offered me some aromatic tea in purple-and-gold porcelain and delicate slices of cake in even more outrageous chromatic combinations. We talked for about an hour. Even in his white turban and long flowing gown, he looked like a good stocky middle-weight and he sparred skilfully in every round.[2]

"I am afraid that much of all this may perhaps be too tricky for a Christian to understand. For this is both religion and politics, and we never draw sharp lines here. Wasn't the Prophet in politics? And haven't we learned that bad politics is bad religion? Our reading of the Koran suggests that God does not change the destinies of people unless they themselves make proper preparation. Did not the Prophet teach us that we will be governed according to our own behaviour? So it is that we must speak and act and God will help...."

I asked him about the "future of democracy" and its apparent failure in the first years of Sudanese independence.

"I refuse to believe that democracy has failed. It remains the safest system for men. There were many mistakes. There were constitutional errors and personal misdemeanours. All this can still be repaired. But we do have a democratic tradition—I mean our very own heritage of conciliation and tribal bargaining. That, if you will, is the essence of it: consultation and compromises. And that is why any kind of military régime is intolerable!

"What do generals understand of democracy or good government? They can only spoil decent administration and corrupt good manners. Military men care only for servility. They must never be encouraged to have political ambitions."

But what if such a régime refuses to consider itself temporary and censors the use of the word *Provisional*?

"An army belongs in the barracks, and civilians belong in the government. We must make a transition, in one way or another, to a new constitution and new elections. What a bitter disappointment these last years have been for us! How long we worked for independence and to have Sudanese at long last run things! A handful of autocratic generals is not the solution. This kind of a régime cannot continue...."

How would, how could, the transition come?

"I have already presented the Generals with several memoranda. They have had the widest

[1] Four hundred years ago, before a mechanical nationalism displaced a more humane cynicism, Leo Africanus could write: "For mine own part, when I hear the Africans evil spoken of, I will affirm myself to be one of Granada, and when I perceive the nation of Granada to be discommended, then will I profess myself to be an African...."

[2] In view of Sayed Siddik al-Mahdi's sudden death in Khartoum on the 2nd of October, I record our conversation more frankly than I would otherwise have felt free to do. He was only forty-nine, and had just recently succeeded his father, Sayed Sir Abdel Rahman al-Mahdi (who died in March, 1959) as the Imam of the powerful Ansar religious sect and thus the spiritual leader of several million Muslims.

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possible popular and political support in the community. But they have only been ignored. One day recently I happened to run into one of the Generals and he merely remarked that apparently I was helping to stir up the opposition. Well, I suppose I am. We are not after jobs or posts or portfolios. But the Generals must return to the barracks. They have no followers at all, not in the town nor in the country, nor even, as they think, in the Army. The basic loyalty of a Sudanese villager in uniform remains what it always was, despite bureaucratic oaths.

"Change has to come, and it is coming. With God's help it will be peaceful. But with God's help it will come."

I left and everybody retired for additional prayers. I am sure it was only my romantic historical imagination that trapped my thoughts in the afternoon I had spent in Omdurman, in the house of the Khalifa and the museum of the dervishes and the tomb of the first Mahdi, "the divine leader chosen by God at the end of time to fill the earth with justice and equity, even as it had been filled with oppression and wrong...." I could not help coming away with the feeling that the Mahdi might rise again.

Conversations

A NEWSPAPER PUBLISHER: "By the time you get around to publishing any of it, I suppose I will either be in exile or in jail, so why not get the whole story? ...

"Our real troubles began the day we quoted the remark of Attlee on De Gaulle: 'The General is a good soldier but a poor politician.' ... The kick-back was immediate: 'what did we really mean by that?' ... To make things worse, the main headline that morning announced an official departure in somewhat ambiguous terms: PRESIDENT TO FLY TO-MORROW.... We were solemnly warned—there was press freedom to write as we pleased, *'but not between the lines!'* After that even writing on the lines became very difficult.

"Official Governmental Instruction No. 1 reminded us that the Sudan had common frontiers with the Congo and that nothing we should write should cause any conceivable embarrassment.... No. 2 instructed us that no news was to be published of any political arrests.... No. 3 warned us against the printing of any items connected with the abortive military coup. Nothing about the death sentences (five officers were hanged) nor the prison terms. Only the texts of the official releases were acceptable.... No. 4 insisted that no material was to be quoted from any Embassy's information bulletins....

"Well, that didn't leave us very much room, but worse was to come. We were reprimanded for publishing the photograph of the Minister of Interior in his Brigadier's uniform: he had since been promoted to General. We were prohibited from any discussion of an official Governmental proposal to 'Nationalise the Press.' Our Sports Editor was told to cease and desist from making suggestions as to which players belong on the National Team, for this was a patriotic and not a private matter. Our Literary Editor was warned against printing 'negative and destructive' criticism of cultural events; critiques, if at all necessary, should only be 'constructive.'...

"Anything left? Well, last week's tabus included any mention of Nasser's troubles, the difficulties at Wadi Halfa, and the problems of new Sudanese legislation. Even the story about that quack doctor in a village a hundred miles from here (and his new treatments for eye ailments) has irritated somebody, and we have to cut that!...

"Our last refuge is in Roget's *Thesaurus*. We hunt for usable synonyms. Last night's instruction was to 'avoid any mention of the students' strike.' Our front-page story on the affair avoids any mention of *'strike'* but speaks only of *'the demonstration.'*...

"I doubt whether we'll get away with it. They'll probably close us down...."

A SUDANESE INTELLECTUAL: "I suppose that all of us everywhere have always pretended to have more intellect than we actually have. But remember that in our country of eleven million (though spread over a territory larger than Western Europe) our university in Khartoum has in the last thirty years produced less than a thousand graduates: 208 in medicine, 78 in law.... And this in a population where the literacy rate amounts to about 27 per cent. Naturally we're a small minority, and even within that minority we're real outsiders. The 'Sudanisation' of important jobs has been filling posts with non-graduates, men who have been around the civil service for years and have achieved seniority. Not one of the Governors of our nine provinces is a graduate!... Small wonder we're tending to have a lot of angry

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young men, armed with books and new ideas, fighting our native Establishment. Bureaucrats, here as everywhere, want to preserve the status quo. Books and ideas are very unsettling. So the intellectuals are kept out of any place where their imagination—or their personal ambition—might stimulate real reforms and changes....

"But I don't mean to sound pretentious or overbearing—because God knows we have deep-down problems of our own. Do we constitute, really, a modern intelligentsia? You must not, in talking with us under a gay umbrella of an espresso bar in the piazza, underestimate the force of our traditional culture. Of course we are 'modern' in the sense that we are secular students and not, say, products of traditional institutes like Al-Azhar in Cairo or Mahad Al-Ilmi in Omdurman; and the thing we say we most care about is the urgent application of modern techniques to an undeveloped country's poverty. But there are still many of my own schoolmates who have rejected modern ideas and ways of life and have become hard orthodox Muslims. At the other end there are a few who have escaped completely the old ties of religion and tradition. The rest of us? Well, I am afraid it's true what Trimingham wrote in his book on *Islam in the Sudan*—we keep our ideas and our religion in separate water-tight compartments, and the result is a split personality....

"Does it sound to you like a familiar story of fathers and sons? The father would be a small businessman or a farmer or a worker or a junior employee in government service, with an income just enough to support his family (average size, five). No education, or at best elementary level. The mother, too, is uneducated, and she looks after the house and children. Sisters never go to school and are mostly married off by parental arrangement. Family life is very close and Islam is strictly followed.... This is a composite picture, but it is also fairly close to my own. The Sudanese intellectual is brought up to accept the traditions of his family and society. Yes, this includes female circumcision. I accepted this as a husband, and later on as a father....

"I could be the first to concede that there is a wide, and even dangerous, gap here. It's a painful thing, full of frustrations and terrible conflicts of value. I suppose it is some kind of consolation to know that this pattern of insecurity and alienation can be found all over Africa and Asia and that even Pandit Nehru, for all his apparent power and confidence, is afflicted.[3] So don't think of us simply as intellectuals at the café table, playing with new ideas and slogans. It would be easier if we were, as easy as for Trotsky to leave Vienna's Café Central to go home and make a revolution....

"And yet, such as we are, we will have to go on to make the revolution. Who else is there? When you in the West developed you had a class of entrepreneurs and of craftsmen. We have for the future tasks really only the Intellectual—and he will have to be our entrepreneur, our technician, our executive, our administrator, our all-round organisation man...."

"Oh, don't envy us! We'd much rather remain seated in the piazza, under the gay umbrella, arguing over newspapers and coffee...."

A STUDENT LEADER: "We are militant all right, but I am afraid we have mixed feelings about everything.... What should we think about Egypt or China or England to-day? When Nasser came to Khartoum he had a kind of triumphal entrance. He went down a brand-new boulevard leading to the new Revolution Bridge over the Nile—built with American money (the boulevard, I mean)—and he had a big welcome and you'll still see his picture everywhere. But the slogan that was issued for the day was 'LONG LIVE NASSER AND ABBOUD!' When the entourage came by the University, the students shouted 'LONG LIVE NASSER—*only!*...'

"Of course we are proud of our university which is one of the largest in Africa, and especially now when we have to defend it against government interference. But for many it is a matter of the mind and not the heart. Somebody

[3] "I have become a queer mixture of the East and West, out of place everywhere, at home nowhere. Perhaps my thoughts and approach to life are more akin to what is called Western than Eastern, but India clings to me as she does to all her children in innumerable ways and behind me lie, somewhere in the subconscious, racial memories of a hundred generations of Brahmins. I cannot get rid of either that past inheritance or my recent acquisitions. They are both part of me and though they help me in both East and West, they also create in me a feeling of spiritual loneliness not only in public activities but in life itself. I am a stranger and an alien in the West. I cannot be of it. But in my own country also, sometimes, I have an exile's feeling...." Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography*.

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said the other day, 'What are we supposed to defend?—an institution that's rotten to the core!' and by that he meant that the place is still dominated by the white Expatriates. And this much is true: every time we have wanted to make a change or a reform they would always say, 'No, this would lower standards.' Small wonder that so many are now saying, 'Damn you and your standards!...' We need teachers and we've wanted to have Education as a specialised course; we need good newspapers and magazines and we've demanded a School of Journalism; but neither of these have been considered quite proper academic subjects. Not to speak of our hopes for a university newspaper which would avoid the twin dangers of capitalist commercialism and governmental propaganda.... So we stumble on, without even learning the French we need to be able to talk with French Africans—because the English Department is against it.

"Still, we're properly militant all right, and we've been able to manage strikes and demonstrations.... Who is 'we'? Well, the handful of us who are confused, heart-sick liberals and then the rest of the militants, divided about fifty-fifty, I would say, between Young Communists and Muslim Brothers...."[4]

A Sudanese Philosopher: "Moslems lament the past in a famous dictum which says that 'the best is behind us.' But I imagine we are only doing to-day what men have always been tempted to do, to surrender to alarm. C. P. Snow worries us about 'accident, folly, or madness' in a bomb-ridden world, but then Erasmus thought that in none but his own age had 'so much been permitted to impudence, stupidity, and crime.'... Hasn't one's own time always been presented as the prelude to destruction and damnation? Our own literature abounds in images of sin and perdition. We must look away from it. Otherwise how can we possibly dream of all the things we are struggling for for the Sudan over the next twenty years? Perhaps it is a simple, optimistic dream, with new science overcoming our accursed sicknesses and famines. But here we all are, all dreaming. In twenty years it could be done. If only we can create the proper means of co-operation—between the North and our backward South, among African and Arab neighbours, in the world....

"I can only hope that opinions and emotions will travel faster and touch deeper. You see, the trouble with new strange influences in an illiterate land is that (at least in the past) they have always had to be explained *mystically*. This has spread credulity, acceptance, submission. Think of how the great scholars who came to Sudan five hundred years ago from Cairo, Bagdad, and the Maghreb introduced themselves—they had to justify their superiority and knowledge in supernatural terms. The result was that teaching was done at the expense of thinking. Pupils could have no free minds, and they were cut off from the source of generous and rational sentiments. To establish his worth among his pupils, al-Shaikh Idris' admirers made it known that his learning was unattainable—he received it direct from the Prophet in special sittings during his sleep. A more modest explanation was that he got it from al-Shaikh Abd al-Kaf of the Maghreb who was endowed with the gift of annihilating distances—if he thought of somewhere to go he just was *there*....

"Well, distances are being annihilated to-day, and wondrous knowledge arrives even more swiftly—but our young educated men are learning how to think!...

"Strange, that our own turbulent epoch has not produced thinkers comparable in stature and prestige to those that emerged under Ottoman rule. There has been nobody amongst us like Jusuf Awwad or like Arslan and Raihani. But perhaps we need something less than great ideas—something less would be more modest and more relevant, if more prosaic. I am thinking of a new understanding of the tragic problems of minorities and religious differences and economic disparities. How can we approach them other than through the ideas of some *new* kind of *federalism*? If there is a future it should belong to the New Federalists. *Diversity within*

[4] Times change, a little. Describing the Khartoum rebels at Gordon College several generations ago, Edward Atiyah has written (in his *An Arab Tells His Story*, 1946): "...the revolt of the educated class in the Sudan, as well as in other Eastern countries, against the British was mainly emotional, mainly a revolt of wounded *amour propre* aggravated by a burning inferiority-complex; it was a revolt not against oppression, injustice, or economic exploitation—of which in the Sudan at least there was practically no trace—but against spiritual arrogance, racial haughtiness, social aloofness, and paternal authoritarianism; it was a revolt of the man who is made to feel inferior, who is put in an inferior position and compelled to respect and obey an alien authority in which he has no share...."

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unity—if our efforts do not help that, it will not be an ambition worthy of the pursuit!

"Does this sound too European for you? I hope not. For half a century too many of us have been leaning too heavily on Europe for examples and models. How crude and unsubtle it all was! We neither learned nor laughed. And now there is a revolt, and it is well overdue. In all the papers and periodicals of our Arab world, you will find a reaction against dry superficiality and uncritical dependence on ill-comprehended foreign styles. No, our spiritual background is Muslim Arab culture and our setting is African —and our only hope is to tend to the imported seedling from the West but to see to it that the delicate grafting is properly done! . . .

"May I leave one other thought with you? You have heard enough of our materialist necessities—of 'the war against poverty' and 'the revolution of rising expectations' and the rest of it. But why are so many blind to the fact that the unscrambling of Africa has not merely been a revolt for and against *things* but a revolt of and with *feelings*. Wasn't human indignation at the root of it all? African soldiers who fought in World War II were indignant not because of the difference in rations but because of the spirit of the different treatment. Here the West is erring grievously in arousing and reinforcing a mind-lost materialism. The debate is already raging everywhere amongst us between material output *v.* democracy. Where do Western philosophers stand? I have been told that it is wrong for me to consider that 'a single party-system is necessarily undemocratic'—and that opposition movements can only weaken national efforts.

"I do not believe this and do not want to believe this. Warn the West which seems to think that some kind of totalitarian democracy is good enough for the Dark Continent—*it is not*. . . ."

A Letter

DEAR M.,

The first whiff you get coming from the sands of Khartoum is the coolness of the Ethiopian plateau: this is where Africa can hide from itself. But not for long. The second whiff is the smell of the incredible revolt of last December, and it is still very much with us: I talked to an official who fumbled a bit with the facts and apologised by saying that he was very new because his predecessor had been shot, here at his desk. This morning I strolled over to the open field near Menelik Square where the gallows had been improvised for the bodies of the leading rebels. Most of the serious conversations I have had revolved, in one way or another, around the notion of revolution or reform. Any discussion of the hopes for change or progress turns quickly to a hushed mention of recent events. I was frankly surprised to find how often I heard regret expressed at the failure of the rebels. Not that the Emperor is hated: far from it. Little of the opposition seems to be personal. But the longing for progress would seem to be great everywhere. I spent a few days in the countryside which is nine or ten centuries back (my dating of it would be 1066, or perhaps 1215). One hears again and again: things are just not going ahead, except in the vain paternalistic way of a clever, ambitious, and not unenlightened absolute monarch. The educated classes, small as they are, are restless and disappointed. The students are full of vague ideas. Military persons, whether in the Bodyguard or the Army, have an itch to act, partly because of personal ambitions, partly because of a mental tic (Kemal, Chiang, Napoleon?). And in the Court itself there is the rich old tradition of intrigue which, as I took in the rumours and the gossip, sounded like Muscovite plots and counter-plots of the 17th century. Result: things are still cooking and something will change. Probably it will have to wait for the succession-crisis. The Emperor is said to have said to the Crown Prince (who was the titular head of the revolution, although apparently with reluctance, or even against his will) "I will forgive you, and forget you." That means some kind of hop-skip-and-a-jump when the time for coronation comes, and manœuvres for the Regency are on. Some of the Army officers did have "ideas"; one of the leaders had, for whatever it meant, "a shelf full of Marxist books and pamphlets. . . ." Liberal feelings and reformist passions are still strong. Some things will move, some things will give way. The new tensions and contradictions are too great, the main one being that this land, as someone unhappily put it, is not "closed off like Tibet" (was!). Symbolic of the contradiction is the magnificently modern new "Africa Hall" which the Emperor has had built for the U.N.'s "Economic Commission for Africa." It stands on a hill just opposite the Imperial Palace; and into it swarm the new nationalistic intellectuals of independent Africa

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with all the buzzing of criticism and plans and modernity. It is infectious. Does the Emperor know this? But he gambles anyway. You've got to see the Ethiopians, young and old, listening in to the debates—yesterday afternoon: the Ghanaians trickily supporting the dialectical proposals of the Guineans, all brilliantly persuasive—and you feel the winds of intellectual change which may later bring on the storm.

In the famous revolutionary broadcast of the Crown Prince—some say the text was given to him at the microphone at the point of a pistol—I find these sentences:

> ...But empty promises can no longer satisfy the people who now want concrete action aimed at improving their standard of living. Development plans have not been executed in practice and the long strides being made by the newly-independent African states, who are making progress day by day, have made the people of Ethiopia realise that these new nations are advancing fast, leaving them behind....

The people, Prince Assafa Wossen went on to say, "are like bees in a disturbed hive and will no longer tolerate oppression...." In his indictment of the *ancien régime*, there is this:

> The two major factors that have hampered the advancement of the Ethiopian people are the unquenchable greed for money on the part of a few persons and the scheming for power by some elements on the basis of their ancestry and hierarchy....

The Crown Prince went so far as to promise that he would serve the constitution and the people "on a specific salary like any other Ethiopian." The Student Rebels went so far—they later petitioned for the Emperor's forgiveness (and got it)—as to raise the cry for a "People's Government." General Mengistu Newaye went as far as he could when, at the trial which sent him to the gallows, he said: "I must die so as to see again those who died before, and to tell them the seed we sowed has taken root...."

Conversations

A Foreign Observer: "For my own part I do not regret that the *coup d'état* failed. The Ethiopian liberals have been much too dazzled by what they think they see when they look over their frontiers. They have suddenly become young men in an African hurry. They fail to look beyond the façade of things and neglect to note that foreign-style radical action removes some old tensions but creates new ones. No, the revolutionaries could never have achieved what they set out to do—and a good thing too. Ethiopia without a strong monarch would be a cursed place. It is truly the only symbol of unity in a land full of illiterates, dozens of linguistic groupings and ethnic minorities, Moslem and pagan separatists, and other fissiparous elements....

"Nevertheless, the Emperor and his men needed an eye-opener, and they got it. Even the *Ethiopian Herald* at the time—and it is, after all, a government-owned newspaper—printed a letter which was signed "SCARED." A few of the Ministers, at least the European-educated ones, say in private that they hope the lessons of the uprising will not be lost. There were endless arguments as to whether it was 'foolish' and 'wicked,' 'calculated and Communist-inspired' (some of the phraseology in the first proclamation was curious). But one thing is sure: it was amateurish and ill-planned....What bunglers most military men are when they start playing at revolution! Even the Prussian generals, in July 1944, overlooked cutting off Hitler's telephone lines. These chaps in the Royal Bodyguard just couldn't work out a policy about the Emperor. If they seized power when he was in town, they could take him prisoner—but if he decided to return from abroad could they ever prevent his triumphal return?...Anyway, even among the rebels, Haile Selassie is held in great esteem and affection. It is always 'the men around him' who are the guilty ones....I was told that Governor Germane Newaye (brother of the General) did not execute his hostages immediately, but sat them down around the table and read them the charges of a revolutionary indictment. He accused them of being the source of the Emperor's confusion and disorientation. He gave them chapter and verse of their parasitism, their venality, their misuse of power. It was probably all pretty accurate because it was prepared by Colonel Workhena who had been the Security Chief....

"Does the Emperor now realise that the *L'Etat-c'est-moi* way of doing things is over? If he does then the nation-state which he and his predecessor Menelik forged out of the disparate and far-flung tribes which populate the plateaux and lowlands of this country may survive.... Otherwise chaos will come again, and there

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may be civil wars and even—who knows?—foreign intervention...."

A European Businessman: "I knew that the revolution was doomed when in the early morning after the rumour had spread that the Emperor was flying back from Brazil the wailing of the women began. They were out on all the streets and from dawn on I heard nothing but the traditional female trilling—ululations of hope and welcome—a kind of Africanised *hallelujah* (from which it probably derives).... The rebellious bodyguards heard it too, and many began to lose their morale. The fear was great that Haile Selassie might land at Dessie and gather together the fearsome tribal horsemen for a crusade. In the ensuing panic and fright some fifteen Ministers of the Emperor were slaughtered....

"Has the Emperor learned the lesson? Well, he has already conceded some of the radical demands. He has given the soldiers more pay and better conditions. He will educate more students. He may even do something about property rights for the landless farmers.... But the real difficulty is not in the man, but in the system. The man is enlightened. But the system —and I mean his *personal* system—is no longer workable. If a new school is to be built, he supervises the architectural plans and approves the curriculum. If money is to be appropriated, he checks the figures in the budget. Why, each day he even gets a full list of the passenger arrivals in Addis Ababa to see who's coming and going!... Obviously, not very much can get done that way.... Sometimes when I try to see a Minister I have to wait weeks and even months—most of the time they are away from their offices and hanging around the Palace, waiting themselves for a chance to have a minute with the *Negus Negusti*.... The solution, one would think, is simple—power must be shared, powers must be delegated. But how can the Elect of God really be persuaded that, in this divine order of things, he actually needs others?... So it is that we get no roads and no cash crops and no administration... A few years ago a group of us banded together, raised some money, and bought some land (with the permission of the Palace, of course). We put up a building for a new playground and donated it, gratefully, 'to the children of Addis Ababa.' It is still there, as we left it, unfurnished, unopened, with nothing but an official wire fence around it....

"The thousand-year sleep is disturbed but still unbroken...."

A Passing Traveller: "Whenever I come through I call in at various ministries. The so-called 'Governmental changes' are really a game of musical chairs—the same old bodies on different seats.... What a shame! For this is one of the richest countries in Africa! In some areas you can get two wonderful crops a year. One little strip I knew up on a northern plateau could alone practically feed the whole nation.... But what are the ruling cliques around the court interested in? In nothing, except possibly ordering the newest model limousine, and building a few private villas to rent at exorbitant prices to resident foreigners.... No, I tell you the recent revolution was '1905' for Ethiopia. Or maybe it was more like Russia's 1826, with the December rebels as true *Dekabristi* bringing liberal light from the outside into the Byzantine darkness. . . . How ironic it is that it should have been the Americans here who, through their ill-starred 'Military Assistance Group,' should have frustrated the reformist hopes. Many of the leaders were American-educated, and at least three of them were graduates of Columbia University. The grisly joke was that had they gone to Harvard, they might have had the U.S. planes on their side.... (Had they gone to Oxford, they would have done nothing but cry into their warm beer 'what this country needs is twenty years of British rule.'...)

"No, nobody would want a bloody revolution for this country. The palace revolution was horrible enough, and I helped some of the doctors remove the hundreds of dead from the streets before the hyenas came down from the hills and got at them....

"But will the Emperor be moved to change enough of the traditional ways? After he visited Accra and met with Kwame Nkrumah, he is said to have said, in that aphoristic manner of his, 'How much better it is to sacrifice oneself for one's country than to sacrifice one's country for oneself....' The sacrifice isn't necessary. But the people are waiting with outstretched hands. And there is a charming custom among the Ethiopians—when they receive a gift they stretch out both hands, for to offer only one would be a sign of reluctance or impudence. What will the Emperor give? And how long before other hands turn again to political impudence?

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A JEW: "It all began with Moses who, according to *Numbers* (xii.1), 'married an Ethiopian woman.' Then there is the story of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba which is told not only in *Kings* but also in Ethiopia's national saga, the *Kebra Negast*—and there the Queen says, 'From this moment I will not worship the sun but the creator of the sun, the God of Israel.' Their son was, of course, Menelik the First, from whom all the Ethiopian emperors have claimed direct dynastic descendance. I have also heard of a Jewish legend about the Solomon-Sheba affair which says that Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian King, was also their son. That would make it quite a family! ... Anyway the *Kebra Negast* is holy source enough, and when the British had looted the manuscript (in the 19th century), King John had to petition for its return 'for in my country my people will not obey my orders without it.' ...

"By the time of the Axum Empire, the Ethiopians considered themselves the rightful successors to the Jews, thought of their country as 'Zion' and of their capital as 'the second Jerusalem.' But for long centuries there was always the danger—or, if I may, the hope—that a genuinely Jewish state would be restored. Rabbi Aquiba used to take long journeys to roughly this vicinity, and it must have been worth his while. Another Jewish traveller wrote of a Jewish kingdom 'beyond the rivers of Abyssinia' (Cush). Even your James Bruce of Scotland has written of the dynasty founded by Judith, the 'Jewish Queen.' As a matter of fact the King of Abyssinia was hard-pressed to resist her forces, and we actually know of a letter to the King of Nubia asking for help.

"Has this anything to do with the Jewish *Falashas* of to-day who often call themselves one of 'the lost tribes of Israel'? Were they some of the original refugees after the destruction of the Temple? The scholars doubt it. Your Professor Ullendorff of Manchester says no. Conti Rossini also says no. But, believe me, they can't really be sure either!

"At any rate, when I first came here—from Eastern Europe—I was simply overwhelmed at how 'Jewish' everything was! Have you been to one of the traditional religious services—what does it remind you of if not a Sabbath morning in an orthodox *shule*! I found among the various Ethiopian amulets things very close to my own phylacteries and *mezuza*. I was exhilarated to discover the high holy days also falling in September, the Sabbath being celebrated on Saturday, and time reckoned from sunset.

"Their churches are built in something of our Hebrew Temple style, and I find the singing and chanting or prayers often very similar; they also make a procession with their 'ark' in a manner like our carrying of the Torah scrolls.... You can read all this up in the scholarly literature, especially in a paper by Ullendorff,[5] where he points out the similarities even to the extent of discovering that in both theologies there is the mystical insistence on the secret name of God—we both use the word *Adonai*—and that in both traditions there is a ceremonial dignitary called *kohen* amongst us and *kahan* in Ge'ez. There is also an apparently related notion of 'ritual cleanness' in sexual matters. As for circumcision—I think that the Jews and the Ethiopians must be the only two peoples in the world who have it done (as per the command in *Genesis, 17*) on the eighth day....[6]

"What does it all come to? No, I am not trying to propagandise for a new ingathering of the tribes! Quite the contrary. For I still find it difficult, nay impossible, to think of this people as they often think of themselves, namely, as 'children of Israel' and 'chosen by God.' ... What are all these things if not mere fragments of ancient beliefs and customs as preserved in a museum? What has happened to the life and light in them? ... Even the Jewish Falashas share in the general fossilisation. They seek neither Law nor Justice. They know no Hebrew and have never heard of the Mishnah and the Talmud!

"If this is Judaism, then it is a Judaism with the Jews left out...."

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[5] A masterful paper: "Hebraic-Jewish Elements in Abyssinian (Monophysite) Christianity," published in the *Journal of Semitic Studies*, July, 1956.

[6] Who borrowed from whom? Herodotus speculates on this (*Persian Wars*, Book II, Ch. 104) and suggests tentatively that both the Ethiopians and the Palestinians might have learnt the practice from the Egyptians. Lobo, the Jesuit whose 17th-century *Voyage to Abyssinia* was translated by Samuel Johnson (in 1735, and it inspired him to *Rasselas*), has it the other way around, with the Jews as the original source. (To-day in the Coptic Church of Egypt, I am told, circumcision takes place at an age between six and eight years.)

I should also mention that Chinua Achebe, the Nigerian novelist, tells me that among the Ibos of West Africa (and he should know, he is one) it also takes place on the eighth day.

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The Many and the One

TO A RECEPTION at the Palace of the Crown Prince, and at the door I was told to shake hands with the Crown Prince and with *no one else*, which recommendation was repeated by another retainer on the stairs, and by the time the third warning was given to me by a vizier on the landing my right arm was on the verge of a slightly hysterical paralysis. I managed to shake with the Crown Prince *only*, bowed stiffly to the Princess and everybody else, arms frozen to the seams of my trousers, and went on to mix in the imperial rooms, crowded with Persian carpets, lamp-lighted Italian paintings, Scotch whisky, and French canapés. Later on I was presented again to His Highness, this time more personally, less formally, so I neither shook nor bowed but made lightly, quickly for what I intended to be courtly small-talk.

"Oh, I am enjoying your country *so*," I said.

"*Are* you?" he replied.

"Yes, indeed I am," I reassured him.

"Well, *what* about it?"

"Oh, everything, Your Highness," I said.

"But surely something *specific* about it?"

"Oh surely, Your Highness," I said, thinking furiously, and came up with nothing better than: "Your cosmopolitanism! . . ."

"*We* are cosmopolitan?" he asked, almost a bit troubled.

"Well, I really mean," I tried to explain, "your many-sidedness. A place like Dakar is so French, and Lagos is so British, and Leopoldville so Belgian. But in Addis Ababa there is more of the world, all of the others but also the Greeks and the Swedes and the Armenians and even," and this slipped, "the Italians. . . ."

His Highness looked at me sternly. "Is it not better to have *one* friend than many?" I supposed it was.

"Is it not better to have one *strong* friend than many weak ones?" I said yes but found myself whispering.

"Does not one strong friend make for confidence and for stability? Do not many friends make for *confusion*?"

I thought I found myself peering over both shoulders but straightened up in time to say, madly but softly, "If one is strong, Your Highness, then many friends can only be of added lustre. If one is weak or alone then perhaps one friend can be more reassuring. . . ."

"No," he said, firmly, "one strong friend is *always* better. You see, some may be there for a little money and others for a little prestige. But when a crisis comes, one has to turn to *one*, no?"

I said a worried, uncertain yes, and risked mentioning again how much I was enjoying his country, and shook his hand (only), bowed low to everybody else, and descended the stairs stiffly past courtiers and viziers and retainers to the Palace door.

Beyond the Ruins

THE TOWN SQUARE of Gondar, one of the ancient capitals of the Ethiopian Empire, is an Italian piazza in neglect and decline. A wide, empty, double-laned boulevard, with a landscaped green-treed island in-between, leads to a huge stony post-office, with a cinema building to the left, a café to the right next to the marbled counters of what was intended to be the *Banco di Santo Spirito*. Mussolini failed in all except in the ironic endowment to Africa of a fresh set of "Roman ruins." One marble counter is still in use by a local bank manager for the benefit of the three merchants who try to dispose of a few small cash and barter crops. The café is boarded up and the cinema shows no films. In the post-office the clerk sorts the mail for a handful of European residents but does little else except perform a civil marriage or two every year or so: nobody else ever turns up. There are also a few fragments of an abandoned Roman-style colonnade facing the huge sycamore known as "The Tree of the Judges." So ended the European 20th century for the castled town of Emperor Fasiladas.

Up on a nearby hill, inside the old imperial fortress, there is a charming 18th-century bath-house built in the style of fanciful pleasure-palaces, and I am incautious enough to murmur, "Ah, civilisation. . . ." I am warned severely (by a young Austrian anthropologist) to cease immediately all confounding of culture with plumbing. Puzzling over the impressive spectacle of the 17th-century castles, apparently so full of Portuguese, or is it South Arabian, echoes, I am reprimanded again (this time by his Swiss wife) for hinting that Africans are incapable of building anything themselves, and I am properly ashamed. (Only a few days ago, in Addis, a Portuguese minister had shouted at me, "Yes, all the Africans talk of development and progress—but *who* will do it? Name me

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one thing they ever built themselves, just one thing, *anywhere, anytime!* . . .")[7]

The Swiss wife confesses her desperate alarm at every contemporary incursion and tells me how the medical students began to fight malaria by spraying wildly everywhere, including inside all the churches and thus ruined a dozen mediæval paintings—"there's your modern hygiene for you!" I argue futilely that DDT and Art are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but we continue amicably towards the village and stop at the silversmith's. We look at his collection and I buy one with an inscription (in Ge'ez) reading, "Jesus the Nazarene King of the Jews."

Sitting on the earthen floor of his little shop was a large handsome woman feeding her two-year-old at her breast. J. makes a point of introducing me to her, and explains that she had left as a young and beautiful girl for the Sudan and had come back after four years with a small fortune. She established a hundred prestigious cows on her piece of land and proceeded to reinforce her good name by studying the imperial law books; she is now considered one of the best legal experts in a half-dozen nearby villages and actually functions as a mayoress in some of them (but still as a "*talla*-seller" in her own).

"You are so clever," J. says to her, with obvious roguishness, "and so rich—why are you still going around in such smelly rags?"

She pushes the child aside and covers her breast and says, "But I must take care to be like everybody else. . . ."

We coo at the baby, and J. asks, "Who is the father?"

She replies, "How should I know that?"

We drive out to the north-west towards the Falasha community, the "black Jews" of Solomonic heritage who still live by the Pentateuch (and know nothing later as befits "a long-lost tribe of Israel." What has changed here in a thousand years?[8] On a little hill, just off the Italian tar road, we found a small Falasha village. Families were sitting huddled on stones, in front of their mud huts, among the cows and chickens and dung. But progress had come here too. There was rusty corrugated iron for walls and roofs, and in one hut I caught a glimpse of some used and battered food tins. Did they have a Bible? They hadn't, but an old man who was peering through an iron hole assured us that they had all been that day to Sabbath services, and a young woman (wearing an Ethiopian metal cross) sauntered forth to bring us some illustrated brochures which none of them could read (in English and Hebrew printed in Tel Aviv by the Israeli Information Department). She then sold us a hot little toy which had just been baking in her primitive kiln, and it turned out to be a crude model of an automobile, which was not so astonishing for hadn't we just driven up in one?

Whereupon our Amharic guide decided, in a burst of competitive co-existence, to show us his own village, and eastwards we went, beyond the point where Italian slave labour had abandoned road-building, and halted at a neat little clinic where his brother was the senior medical student. Both took turns in demonstrating hypodermic needles and Bunsen burners. Then with a special flourish they turned to their charts full of numbers and tables and diagrams. "You see," the student explained, "progress calls for knowing how many people we have in our country and what they are all doing and nobody really knows whether we have six or sixteen million Ethiopians—so we used all our patients to make a miniature census. . . . Our total village population is 3,249. Our sample was 860 persons. Of them 8 per cent are farmers, 21 per cent are merchants, 32 per cent are *talla*-sellers, 9 per cent government officials, 5 per

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[7] In his *Travels in Ethiopia* (1949), David Buxton writes: "We cannot doubt that Portuguese craftsmen were concerned with Fasiladas' palaces, for though at that period the Jesuit priests had been expelled, there is every reason to suppose that artisans remained. But the style is not Portuguese. . . ."

The "imperialist myth" of denigrating any and all African achievement has, of course, been pernicious. But the counter-ideology which is growing up will, I am afraid, prove less serviceable to real African purposes than the new myth-makers believe. In his understandably partisan exaggerations, a writer like Basil Davidson, in his *Old Africa Rediscovered* (1959), insists on "purely African origins" in order to establish a new native black pride and even finds "an Athens" and "Milans and Nurembergs" in the dim but very unsavage past. I would much prefer equal treatment and political rights to be argued from "the brotherhood of man" than from devious theses of ancient cultural achievement, for I am appalled at the implication that if Africans had no glorious past behind them they would somehow be ineligible for freedom and fraternity.

[8] "Encompassed on all sides by the enemies of their religion, the Aethiopians slept near a thousand years, forgetful of the world by whom they were forgotten. . . ." Gibbon, *Decline and Fall.*

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cent weavers, 2 per cent wood-sellers, 7 per cent labourers, and 9 per cent are prostitutes. . . ."

His moving finger went back to the statistic for *talla*-sellers. "But, as you must know," he added, "these women who sell our sour beer at little cafés cannot really be functionally separated from the category of prostitutes, so that these two figures must really be taken together! . . ." He spoke clinically, with no touch of embarrassment or shame, for where marriage-vows are so rare extra-marital co-habitation, for a casual night or for an unregistered year, is quite beyond a sense of sin.[9] "Thus we arrive at a cumulative statistic of some 41 per cent. of the gainfully occupied as prostitutes. . . ." The voice was that of a patriot, but the sound was that of a sociologist. The behavioural sciences had arrived.

BEYOND THE VILLAGE, past acres of wild fig and olive trees (transplanted from Palestine centuries ago, on the theory that Ethiopia was a second Holy Land), a 14th-century church—and how account for its extraordinary peace and beauty? Was it the strange evening light of the valleys, the altitude, the dust particles, the combinations of brightness and shadow from the endlessly intertwined hills? A boy was leaning against the wall, but said nothing as we approached, only pulled his toga-like *shamma* up from his shoulders over his mouth and nose. Why did he do that? Was it for "protection against the wind" or perhaps "a sign of our politeness" or really to keep away (for the Devil reeked of sulphur!) "the bad smell of strangers"?

We hesitated to go in for there was the buzz and hum of a service going on, but when the priest interrupted his reading to motion us forward we could see that he was alone, reading aloud to himself "and to God" with an accompanying drone from dozens of enormous "holy bumble-bees" (they had last proved themselves by attacking the Mahdist dervishes when the infidel invaders had come to loot and burn the Christian churches). In the semi-darkness we squinted at the pictures, and made out angels floating on the ceiling and fierce black devils on the walls. All of hell was apparently populated with little black men of obviously Nilotic physiognomy—except for one fair and delightful creature who seemed to be about to be gobbled up by the largest and most ferocious devil of them all. According to the local legend, she had been enthralled by devilish charms and had died thereof, but in heaven she went on to plead for the Devil's soul and for his return to the fold of angels. God was astounded at her innocence of true evil and dispatched her to see for herself. And so the Devil took her unto him, placed her in his mouth, but with her head out to observe through all eternity the true nature of his hellish activities. (The moral: "Never try to make an angel out of the devil. . . .")

Near the door there was a splendid portrait of the Emperor Fasiladas with a most brilliant green pearl in his crown. The priest explains: A bird fell in love with a star, kissed it and plummetted with its weight into the Red Sea, and there it was that the green pearl was found. At that the priest returned to his bumble-bees and read on, clutching his silver cross in one hand and removing his other hand from the parchment pages only to adjust his horn-rimmed spectacles.

The Old-time Religion

UP VERY EARLY, and over to St. Michael's —at the Bishop's invitation to attend Sunday morning services. In the garden and forecourt of the square church (stone and mortar, corrugated iron roof), women and a handful of soldiers were huddled on the matted lawn or leaning against trees and fences. At the tin-sheeted portal door, surprisingly, I found shoes, and so removed mine and tip-toed on to mats, straw, and then carpets, from the outer rectangle into the inner. In the outer area there was a curtain and one could see women creeping under and into. . . . In the inner rectangle there were two priests in black Coptic headgear, standing before the innermost place, which, as in all synagogues since the first Temple of Jerusalem, contains the Ark of the Covenant. A Reader, clad in white cloth and turban, with

[9] Describing the current forms of marriage, Professor Edward Ullendorff writes in his scholarly text on *The Ethiopians* (Oxford University Press, 1960): "*Damez* is a limited and 'salaried' matrimonial arrangement by which a woman agrees with a man to cohabit for a specified time (a month or longer) renewable or terminable at the wish of either party, and at a specified remuneration. This is a purely contractual arrangement, and unless her salary has been in arrears the woman has no claim against her partner's estate. On the other hand, any issue from such union is regarded as legitimate with the same rights of inheritance as children born in lawful and full wedlock. . . ."

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the hand-printed parchment Bible on an old brass musical podium, leads in the prayers with a chanted song which then breaks into a speedy mumbled recitative as both the First Priest and the Reader leaf through their prayer books searching casually for the relevant passages. On the walls there are bright new Ethiopian paintings (old and faded ones are considered embarrassing) with familiar scenes of Jesus and the Prophets, but I note lions cropping up in the Palestinian bushes, and there is a sad-faced man-in-the-moon looking down on Calvary. All the Biblical figures are, of course, "whites," not "Africans," and all are in full-face except for villains who are in profile (and that is as it should be, for as I am told, "evil ones can thus be seen but without seeing which could be dangerous....").

Out of the Judaic inner rectangle comes a priest in brilliant costume, with an Ashanti-like gold-red-yellow-purple umbrella held over his head, swinging incense to the Romanesque jangle of bells. The green satin curtain is pulled fully back now (the designs on the tabernacle wall I make out to be lotus flowers, crosses, diamonds, and checkerboard boxes). There is suddenly a cry of babies, and infants are brought forward and given a bit of wafer into their mouths and a sip of holy water. Huge bells begin to ring, and all fall forward into a huddle on the carpeted floor in Moslem-like genuflection.

In the garden again, under a huge beflagged sycamore tree and under even more brilliant parasols, white turbaned priests continue to chant prayers. Some of the soldiers take out small Amharic prayer-books and murmur along. Little boys, with almost completely shaven heads (except for a fuzzy tuft on their foreheads), begin to play in the forecourt. A Princess of the Royal Family who had been at the services steps into her coffee-coloured limousine and is driven off.

We take lunch back at the hotel and we argue blindly about what we had not understood but had presumably seen, heard, and felt. (We were four: a West African, a German, an American, and a Briton.)

"You know," said the West African, "that our so-called lower religions have much more concentration, much more emotional dedication —and even sincerity—than what we have just witnessed. I just can't imagine this casual atmosphere in, say, a tribal sacrificial ceremony. Libation amongst us is a deep and moving thing!..."

"I am sorry to say," added the Englishman, "that these appeared to me to be routine murmurings without real religious dignity. The singing lacked musical interest. It is very far from our notion of a magnificent service, with ritual, true pomp and richness. It was all a bit slapdash. Did you detect any emotional content? Did it have any radiation for you? Can we honestly say that this is evidence of a really religious people?"

"But," said the German, "what kind of prayers did the first Christians conduct? Did they have or need pomp or richness or musical interest when Jesus was still a fresh memory? Mustn't it have been a very ragged affair?"

"No," insisted the Englishman, "a religion is what it *means* and what it *does*."

"But," asked the American, "is a religion never what it *is*? What is it here if not a ceremony with a strange and unique human involvement—that should constitute style and ritual enough. And what it *does* surely is to function in some special way to reconcile man to his fate, as everywhere. Whether this is a meaning with a truth is another matter. Which peoples are converted to what is mostly due to historical accidents. A few violent wars, a passing second-rate Greek-trained dialectician, a triumphant warrior-king, and suddenly there emerges the worship of the True Lord? I doubt it...."

"Still, when creativity stops," the Englishman went on, "or even the creative reinterpretation of the symbol, then all other things stop. Art as well as religion becomes a mechanical and mediocre process."

"I would warn you, however," said the German, "not to look for Creative Force here. It is simply not recognised. Old paintings, for example, are hidden—they are ashamed of them! Have you tried, say, to look for a valuable old Persian carpet? The original with the first design has been disposed of ages ago—families give old ones away and buy new ones.... This is not a people or a land that lives in time. It knows no seasons, no challenges. Spiritually, they are not prepared to give deeply. They pay a bit of attention, and no more is required——"

"But would this produce martyrs or saints or even a missionary spirit?"

"No, but if the Kingdom of God is not of this world, why aspire to spiritual or material

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achievements? The riches of the earth are not for them, and they have apparently had no aspirations for a thousand years. I have asked the people I know whether they want clothes or schools or things, and the answer is invariably no. Enjoy riches, they say, and the enemies come. God, they feel, has given them all they need, and true enough the climate gives them quick growth from seeds, gives them wild berries, gives them their 'magic grass' (*erogrostis abyssinica*) in the fields, a handful of which has enough life-giving minerals to hold them for days. I, alas, want more. But if I could measure happiness I suppose I would have to admit that these people I know here are three times happier than the Ruhr workers I knew in my school-days! . . ."

SURPRISED and pleased by the visit of the Bishop, but I do not allow him to apologise for "only having smiled and not offered a proper greeting" at the church services in the morning. We talk in the inauspicious, and possibly trying, circumstances of the Italian hotel bar, but he sipped his coffee from the old *espresso* machine with some pleasure and genially ignored the photographs of *Cinecitta* beauties and silhouetted nymphs on the walls.

He tells me of the Church attitudes towards the Jews and the Moslems and seemed to suggest that because "we owe most of our customs to the Hebrews" the conversion among the Falasha tribesmen was easier than among the Moslems, but in neither case did I detect any strong proselytising spirit. He tries to explain to me the differences between the Coptic Church and Western Christianity and, arguing against the doctrine of original sin, declares that sin is done in this world, that "sin is not created with Man, but Man commits it. . . ." I asked whether his Church, committed as it is to both the Old and the New Testaments, was more involved with the this-worldly fulfilment of the Hebrew prophets than with the other-worldly fulfilment of the saints. Wouldn't the Hebraic tradition demand a struggle for human justice here and now? He said, "Injustice is in this world and we will have to wait for fulfilment in life after death. Compensation is in heaven. Those who accumulate wealth and material things lead the sinful life. . . ." I also asked about "the Divine Rule of the Emperor," and he appeared to be somewhat qualifying this when he explained: "We call him the Elect of God, and there is a divine spirit in him to rule, and we all pray that this divinity may never go out of him. . . ." He went on to give me some interpretations of the paintings I had seen in the Gondar churches, and they were all piously literal. The meaning of Adam's skull underneath Christ's cross was simply that the crucifixion had taken place precisely above where Adam had been buried. The pictures of Paradise were crowded only with orthodox believers, for "the Books say that only they will be saved and all others are destined for Hell. . . ."

The Bishop had gentle, kindly eyes and smiled heartfully for a full hour. There was an old wondrous oriental touch to our good-bye as we exchanged pleasantries, gratitudes, appreciation. He finally said, "This is a day of fasting but I know God will understand my partaking of your company and the food for thought which I take away. . . ."

On Lake Tana

OUT ALL DAY on Lake Tana and its "holy waters," for Mary apparently stopped here on her flight from Egypt to Ethiopia, and pilgrims come now thousands of miles to dip themselves. We waited at first in a terrifying little *tankwa*, a small craft made of bundles of papyrus reeds which although obviously quite buoyant was something less than water-tight, then went off in a chugging, stinking hulk of an old Italian vessel which had been brought overland from the Red Sea, reassembled, sunk during the war, and now lifted from the bottom into service again. We hauled some petrol from the ugly red-brick casino Mussolini left behind, and it took us off with an oily spluttering roar but not before our anthropologist properly lamented this mechanical pollution of the source of the Blue Nile and the sacred font of fertility.

We are accompanied by Dr. Otto Jäger, the distinguished German scholar,[10] whom I had last seen in Berlin in 1945 when he told me he was leaving "to find primitive Christianity. . . ." We reminisced a bit, but didn't get much beyond Hitler for he had obviously found the Hitlers even here.

[10] See his "Ethiopian Manuscript Paintings" in the *Ethiopia Observer* (December, 1960) and the handsome collection of *Aethiopische Miniaturen* he has had published with Gebrueder Mann in Berlin (1957). UNESCO has just issued in its lavish "World Art Series" a volume of reproductions from Ethiopian illuminated manuscripts with texts by Otto Jäger and Stephen Wright; (N.Y. Graphic Society, 1961).

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"Do you know anything about the Emperor Theodorus? Well, he was a regular little Hitler! . . . Like Schickelgruber, he was illegitimate and a parvenu. He was an outsider to the Solomonic line of succession, but he pretended to be the fulfilment of a thousand years of prophecy and succeeded in proclaiming himself Emperor in 1855. The reign lasted just twelve years. Just like Adolph's, and it also began in murder and ended in the defeat and ruin of his capital. . . . What a tragedy it is for nations and peoples when such murderous, fanatical neurotics come to power—whether in Berlin or in Gondar! Theodore, whose real name was Kassa, was a mystic and a megalomaniac. He hated the minorities and persecuted the Jews, expelled the Catholics, crusaded against the Moslems. For a single false word an author would be killed, and there were dozens of Lidices as he burned down whole villages. When he thought he had been snubbed and insulted by London—a letter to Queen Victoria had gone unanswered—he threw all the Europeans into concentration camps. . . . When the Napier Expedition set out from Bombay to liberate the prisoners, Theodore put all his hopes on a *Wunderwaffe*, an enormous new cannon much feared by all. 'The great sound of its voice would cause every woman with child to miscarry; the people would sicken in agony and die.' Of course the new miracle weapon failed. Doesn't it always? It fired once and blew up. And how do you think this regular little Hitler ended? He committed suicide by shooting himself through the roof of his mouth! . . ."

I BELIEVE HIM, I believe him, but what of primitive Christianity? We sail by the island of Tana Cherkos—where, according to tradition, the Ark from the Temple of Jerusalem was brought (until its later transfer to Axum and the "Kingdom of Zion")—and a dozen other little islands, all with ancient churches and colonies of anchorite monks. Frau D. remains back on board, sun-bathing, as we row out towards Menen Darba and the brothers are suddenly all there in the cove, arranged in mediæval pattern to welcome us: the leaners against the trees are the elders, the squatters on the stones the novices. The younger men cover up almost completely as we land; the high priest only covers his fingers with his cloth before shaking our hands and taking us to his 14th-century chapel. This is a community of hermits and several tell us of their youthful decisions "to turn their backs on society." But the differences between home and hermitage would seem to be so minimal that can this really be called a flight from life? Doubtless there is great peace here, still I try in vain to catch a sense of deep monastic purpose or reflective withdrawal. Most all of the men are illiterate and the spiritual truths held fast in their texts and pictures have a deadening formality about them. I look at their wall paintings and they apparently can still read the mediæval speeches as depicted in the traditional hand gestures of blessing, threat, and prayer. They are reluctant to show us the old manuscripts and try to regale us with "new acquisitions." I seem almost to detect a sign of ascetic relief that the Italians had looted the most venerable relics of the "Zionist" period: they speak of "gold and ivory objects" with the same other-worldly unexcitement as of the rusty iron bolts on their individual cell-like huts. A scribe, with long elegant fingers, is preparing new parchment from mixed goat, horse, mule, and sheep-skins, and a novice brings him some food (more "magic grass") and a bowl of water taken from the lake. On the wall above is a picture of two brilliant angels, floating on low white clouds to collect the blood of Christ in bejewelled golden goblets. We sit for a while in the gruelling heat, on a nearby cliff looking out towards Tana Cherkos, entangled in a spiritual and emotional passivity bordering on vegetation.

THE MORNING PLANE from Gondar to Addis takes us low over the cataracts of the Blue Nile and high over bleak, treeless plateaus. Somewhere between Bahr Dar and Debre Tabor one of our wings starts fluttering loosely and helplessly in the strong winds and we go down quickly for a landing at seven thousand feet perched between two precipitous escarpments. Our pilots inspect the damage, kibbitzed by a little Italian mechanic who is on a repairman's tour in the Northern towns, equipped with a bag of tools, three shovels, and a battered wheelbarrow. The first pilot suggests fastening flap and wing together with a strong rope. The second pilot thinks it might get untied and entangled in the propeller. The Italian mechanic suggests screwing the loose parts together and he had the screw-driver right there. The two pilots finger the limp metal and suspect that a screw might damage the fuel-line. Then the passengers propose, with appropriate melodrama, lightening the craft by dumping cargo and even

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baggage; but there isn't much (a small stove, two radio sets, four cases of cigarettes), and anyway the Italian mechanic refuses to part with his implements for if he could simply unscrew and re-bolt that loose rod all would be well again. The pilots signal their Addis base, describe the trouble, and get bland instructions to take off and go on merely by increasing all speeds by ten per cent and holding the plane at a slight fifteen degree angle to the left—no, to the right. I follow all this with a sinking heart. If only we could stay behind! But this is the emptiest, loneliest countryside in the world, as if the land itself were still waiting for the evolution of man. We decide to go along with improvised civilisation, strap ourselves in, and mumble our eclectic prayers. Just before the edge of the escarpment we rise twenty feet and are suddenly, breathtakingly, at seven thousand feet again, tilting a bit to the left and again to the right. For an hour we sway and glide and then, like a dying butterfly, come down to make our safe landing.

Diary

IN THE CROWDED MARKET, a young man with a stack of papers under his arm stops me and asks, "Are you a writer? Do you read the *Economist*? Have you seen this editorial here?" I say yes to all three questions, and he then walks busily off, as if he had just been confirmed in his world and way of life.

Outside my hotel Errand Boy No. 2 confides to me that he wants to become a journalist. Why? "Because then I would be really free! Now I am treated like a slave. You see, I am from the South. Errand Boy No. 1 is my senior, and he happens to be a lighter fellow, a Hamitic type. So he's terrible! He's fierce! Why, he's worse than white Americans in Little Rock...."

A MILE OUT from the hotel the taxi runs out of petrol. The driver reassures me with a *"minuto, minuto!"* and races off like a long-distance trotter, leaving me sitting on the running-board. Some time later he comes jogging back with a six-ounce can, pours it in, huffs and puffs into the tank, and when everything fails, shrugs his shoulders and leaves me to my fate in the middle of nowhere. After an hour I hail another taxi and he gets me there. He calms me by explaining that the animals in the dark were only spotted hyenas and they're needed to keep the city streets clean. On his seat in front is an American book, with a neat little place-marker in it, entitled *Sweden, the Welfare State.*

SPEND THE REST of the evening prowling around the back alleys of the old town, in and out of dozens of little bars, each with a shack of its own, a few shelves of bottles, three or four girls and an old lady. Swill beer for a while, listen to tape-recordings of dance music, and watch some of the girls shuffle gracefully around the tables and chairs. One is very pleasant and smiles warmly, and when I go I am foolhardy enough to slip into her hand several notes as a tip. In the alley I could hear the furious brawl, the girls fighting each other, the old lady denouncing them all....

RUN BY CHANCE into Ato Yakeb again. He had been very curt the other day when I tried to put a few questions. He said, "Better try the foreigners here. They know more. They can speak freely. We Ethiopians know very little, and our feelings we keep to ourselves...." Now on the street he talks on. "No, I should at least have said to you how unhappy we are with our situation. There has been almost no change. No younger men have been given an opportunity. How sad it is to think that our people must still feel that we in the educated class have nothing in common with them! But we have, and we must somehow some day show it...."

TO THE Imperial Zoo, and am captivated by the royal single-mindedness of the "Conquering Lion of Judah." There isn't a monkey here or a snake or a hippopotamus. In the whole zoo nothing but lions. Young ones, old ones, wild ones, cubs. Thirty-eight of them....

"CAN'T TELL THEM APART"—that sour old wheeze of paleface tourists in Africa and Asia. But can they always tell themselves apart? Poor Chinua Achebe is travelling for the first time on the East coast, "and in Zanzibar I couldn't tell the Arabs from the Shirazis." He says wearily he is taken for an ignorant lout everywhere, for they chatter away at him and he can only stare dumbly back. He has no Swahili in Kenya, no Amharic in Ethiopia. He threatens to reply furiously in Ibo or Yoruba, but why confuse Africa even more?

TO THE STUDIO of an artist who "once studied in Paris, in Picasso's blue spring of 1912...." He tells me a story which is vaguely familiar. "I was once asked to do a portrait of the

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Emperor and I was allowed to call at the Palace each day for a week. I set up my easel in a corner and began filling in the deep outlines. But then came a Minister of the Pen, squinted over my shoulder, and whispered worriedly to me, 'Not too dark!' I made a few additional brush-strokes, changed colours a bit here and there, and then I was told, 'But, please, not too light either!'..."

And the Emperor? "Oh, he was running the country the whole time, and that is his genius! It was in the middle of the Imperial office with my easel. To my left were a bunch of Army officers, and as the Emperor sat at his desk looking at state papers, scribbling comments in the margin, he also handed out medals, glanced piercingly at each hero and thanked him for loyal services to the Empire. To the right was a swarm of priests and monks, pleading in turn for roof repairs to their churches or some other royal favour, and the Emperor also listened and commented and every now and then announced his decision. It all went on at once and together! Has there ever been anybody like him since the days of Cæsar or Napoleon or Frederick the Great?..."

But his wife laments for a Princess of the Court who has been sent away. "They say she is 'disturbed,' and she concedes but means privately something else: disturbed by conditions, disturbed by the failure of the revolt.... They sent a Swedish doctor to see her. She moaned bitterly but always about the backwardness of the country and longed for Progress. The doctor tried to console her by arguing, 'But what is Progress really? Here 40 per cent of your sick have parasites. There in the West 40 per cent of the sick are mentally ill....' She listened but understood privately something else. 'I would rather be progressive and disturbed—than have parasites.'..."

To THE AIRPORT, accompanied by Tefasha Teshari who has been my image of the intelligent and successful representative of the new generation, and I ask him whether he or his father or his grandfather really considered themselves to be "Africans."

"My grandfather? Never! The very idea of it would have outraged him or mystified him. He had nothing to do with Africa. He was no African. He was an Ethiopian, pure and proud.... My father felt pretty much the same way. At least until 1935. Then the Italians came, and from then on he began to feel that he was also an African....

"When did I become an African? When I first went to Europe...."

ETHIOPIAN MINIATURES

1. St. John
Gospels of the Emperor Fasiladas (1632–1667)

2. Flight to Egypt
Miracles of Mary (18th Century)

3. Christ's Baptism
Gospels of the Emperor Zara Yacob (1434–1468)

4. The Apostles St. John, St. Jacob, St. Peter, and St. Paul
Folding book of the 15th or 16th century

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Michael Hamburger

In a Cold Season

I

Words cannot reach him in his prison of words
Whose words killed men because those men were words
Women and children who to him were numbers
And still are numbers though reiterated
Launching into air to circle out of hearing
And drop unseen, their metal shells not broken.
Words cannot reach him though I spend more words
On words reporting words reiterated
When in his cage of words he answered words
That told how with his words he murdered men
Women and children who were words and numbers
And he remembered or could not remember
The words and numbers they reiterated
To trap in words the man who killed with words.
Words cannot reach the children women men
Who were not words or numbers till they died
Because cold minds encased in terror clung
To numbers words that did not sob or whimper
As children do when packed in trucks to die
That did not die two deaths as mothers do
Who see their children packed in trucks to die.

II

Yet, Muse of the IN-trays, OUT-trays,
Shall he be left uncelebrated
For lack of resonant numbers calculated
To denote your hero, and our abstract age?
Rather in the appropriate vocabulary
Let a memorandum now be drawn up—
Carbon copies to all whom it may concern—
A monument in kind, a testimonial
To be filed for further reference
And to circulate as required.
Adolf Eichmann, civil servant (retired):
A mild man, meticulous in his ways,
As distinctly averse to violence
As to all other irregularities
Perpetrated in his presence,
Rudeness of speech or deportment,
Infringements of etiquette
Or downright incompetence, the gravest offence;
With a head for figures, a stable family life,
No abnormalities
Never lost his temper on duty
Even with subordinates, even with elements earmarked
For liquidation;
Never once guilty of exceeding his authority
But careful always to confine his ambitions
Within the limits laid down for personnel of his grade.
Never of course, a maker of policy,
But in its implementation at office level,
Down to the detailed directive, completely reliable;
Never, perhaps, indispensable,
Yet difficult to replace
Once he had mastered the formalities
Of his particular department
And familiarised himself with his responsibilities
As a specialist in the organisation
Of the transport and disposal of human material—
In short, an exemplary career.

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III

Words words his words—and half his truth perhaps
If blinking, numb in moonlight and astray
A man can map the landmarks trace the shapes
That may be mountains icebergs or his tears
And he whose only zeal was to convert
Real women children men to words and numbers
Added to be subtracted leaving nothing
But aggregates and multiples of nothing
Can know what made him adept in not knowing
Feel what it was he could not would not feel—
And caged in words between their death his death
No place no time for memory to unfreeze
The single face that would bely his words
The single cry that proved his numbers wrong.
Probing his words with their words my words fail.
Cold cold with words I cannot break the shell
And almost dare not lest his whole truth be
To have no core but unreality.

IV

I heard no cry, nor saw her dying face,
Have never known the place, the day,
Whether by bullet, gas or deprivation
They finished her off who was old and ill enough
To die before long in her own good time;
Only that when they came to march her out of her human world,
Outmoded furniture, mementoes, widow's urn,
They made her write a postcard to her son in England,
'Am going on a journey'; and that all those years
She had refused to travel even to save her life.
Too little I know of her life, her death,
Forget my last visit to her at the age of nine,
The goodbye like any other that was the last,
Only recall that she, mother of five, grandmother,
Freely could share with a child all her little realm;
Recall her lapdog who trembled and snapped up cheese—
Did they kill her lapdog also, or drive him away?—
And the bigger dog before that, a French bulldog, stuffed
To keep her company still after his early death.
Three goldfishes I recall, one with a hump on his back
That lived for years though daily she brushed her fishes
Under the kitchen tap to keep them healthy and clean;
And how she conspired with us children,
Bribed us with sweets if we promised not to tell
Our father that she, who was diabetic,
Kept a pillbox of sweets in her handbag
To eat like a child in secret—
When neither could guess that sweets would not cause her death.
A wireless set with earphones was part of the magic
She commanded and freely dispensed,
Being childlike herself and guileless and wise. . .
Too little I know of her wisdom, her life,
Only that guileless, she died deprived
Of her lapdog even, stuffed bulldog and pillbox of sweets.

V

And yet and yet I would not have him die
Caged in his words their words—one deadly word
Setting the seal on unreality
Adding one number to the millions dead
Subtracting nothing from death dividing nothing
Silencing him who murdered with words
Not one shell broken, not one word made flesh
Nor in my hatred would imprison him
Who never free in fear and hatred served
Another's hatred which again was fear
So little life in him he dared not pity
Or if he pitied dared not act on pity;
But show him pity now for pity's sake
And for their sake who died for lack of pity;
Break from the husk at last one naked grain
That still may grow where the massed carrion lay
Bones piled on bones their only mourners bones
The inconceivable aggregate of the dead
Beyond all power to mourn or to avenge;
See man in him spare woman child in him
Though in the end he neither saw nor spared—
Peel off the husk for once and heed the grain,
Plant it though he sowed nothing poisoned growth;
Dare break one word and words may yet be whole.

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John Sparrow

Regina *v.* Penguin Books Ltd.

An Undisclosed Element in the Case

I HAVE RECENTLY had occasion to study the Penguin summary of the proceedings in the *Lady Chatterley* prosecution, and to read with close attention the unexpurgated version of the novel. As I perused *Lady Chatterley's Lover*, the significance of certain passages in the book, not obvious at a first reading, gradually became clear to me; and these passages, once their true meaning was appreciated, revealed an unsuspected element in Lawrence's beliefs and feelings about sex—something that one would, I think, be justified in calling a most important tenet in his sexual creed. Yet, if the Penguin summary is to be trusted, this remarkable belief of Lawrence's was not once referred to in the course of the Old Bailey proceedings (although the trial provided, according to the publishers, Penguin Books Ltd., "probably the most thorough and expensive seminar on Lawrence's work ever given"), and the passage that contains the fullest revelation of it —a passage which is a climax, if not *the* climax, of the novel—was referred to by only one of the thirty-five "experts" who gave evidence about the book, and that witness did not explain its significance—if, indeed, he understood it.

Towards the end of the trial, it is true, attention was drawn to this very passage, not by a witness but by prosecuting counsel, who read parts of it to the jury in the course of his closing speech, with the cryptic comment, "Not very easy, sometimes, not very easy, you know, to know what he is driving at." But though counsel no doubt himself appreciated what Lawrence was "driving at," he did not explain it to the jury, and was content to leave the matter there.

As for the defence, even if they fully appreciated the meaning of the passage, they were of course under no obligation to refer to it if they thought that such a reference would be harmful to their case; the duty of defending counsel was owed not to Literature but to their clients, Penguin Books Ltd., whose considerable financial interest in the book involved them in their turn in a duty to their shareholders. Anyhow, Mr. Gerald Gardiner made no reference to the matter in the very full account that he gave to the jury of the sexual element in the novel; and, naturally, neither side having made any point of it, there was no reference to it in the Judge's summing-up.

Now that the case is over and the shareholders are secure in enjoyment of their profits, Penguin Books would no doubt be the first to agree that it is in the interests of Literature that Lawrence's full meaning and purpose in the book should be made clear to its readers.

THE PASSAGES—for there are more than one of them—that so surprisingly escaped notice at the Old Bailey reveal Lawrence's attitude towards a certain "unnatural" sexual practice. Lawrence weaves into his story not merely a defence but a panegyric of this practice, making *Lady Chatterley's Lover* a vehicle for conveying his

PREVIOUS *contributors to our series of articles discussing D. H. Lawrence's* Lady Chatterley's Lover *and the now-famous trial at the Old Bailey included Katherine Anne Porter, Colin Welch, Rebecca West, Richard Hoggart, Andrew Shonfield, and Raymond Williams (see* ENCOUNTER, *February 1960, and February, March, and September 1961).*

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belief that it is a proper, if not a necessary, element in a full sexual relationship between man and woman.

It is best, at the outset, to be clear about the meaning of the words we have to use. The practice approved by Lawrence is that known in English law as buggery. This is by no means to be equated (as is sometimes ignorantly supposed, and as colloquial usage might suggest) with homosexual practice. "Homosexual relations" means sexual relations between men or between women; under our law, any indulgence in such relations between men (assuming that it constitutes an act of "gross indecency") is an offence punishable by not more than two years' imprisonment; between women, such indulgence is no offence at all. The "full offence" of buggery, on the other hand, involves *penetratio per anum*; here, the active party can only, of course, be a man; the passive party may be either a man or a woman; in either case, both parties (even if husband and wife) are liable under our law to imprisonment for life.

There is no need here to discuss whether indulgence in these practices is morally wrong, or how wrong it may be, or whether all or any of them should be forbidden by law—the answers to these questions are irrelevant to my present purpose.

Nor do I attempt to answer the question whether *Lady Chatterley's Lover* was "obscene" within the meaning of the Obscene Publications Act, 1959, under which the proceedings against the book were taken; nor the question whether, if it was obscene, its literary or other merits are such as would have justified an acquittal under the Act; the answers to these questions are likewise irrelevant to the point I seek to bring to light. But, though it is not my purpose to criticise either the trial or the book itself, I ought perhaps to confess that to me the defence reeked of humbug (I do not say hypocrisy, for all the witnesses were no doubt sincere, however much of their evidence may appear ridiculous or pathetic to a dispassionate observer), and that I find the novel extremely distasteful, despite its serious purpose and the brilliance of a number of passages in it, and think it a failure both as a moral or sociological tract and as a work of art. But Lawrence was beyond question important as a writer and as a proponent of sexual reform, and it seems worth while to bring into the light of day what is, if I am right, an important article in his sexual creed.

"IF I AM RIGHT": I can only appeal, in support of my thesis, to the text.

A main theme of Lawrence's novel is the sexual relationship between Lady Chatterley and the gamekeeper Mellors, and the change wrought in Lady Chatterley herself by the attentions of an expert—for whatever else Mellors may have been, Lawrence leaves us in no doubt that he was that. Lawrence carried out this part of his purpose by describing nine meetings between the lovers,[1] on eight of which occasions they perform (on two of them, three times) the sexual act. He describes in varying degrees of detail both the act and the sensations (particularly the woman's) that accompany it, and these descriptions contain remarkable *tours de force* of imagination and poetical writing.

It was suggested by the prosecution that the author's object in so fully and repeatedly describing sexual intercourse was little or no better than pornographic: that he was pandering to the prurience of his readers, that "sex" was dragged in for its own sake, and that the rest of the book was little more than padding. This was met with an uncompromising denial by the other side. The first witness for the defence, Mr. Graham Hough, put the matter thus (*Trial*, p. 44):[2]

> The reason for the repeated descriptions of sexual scenes is to show the development of Connie Chatterley's awareness of her own nature. The scenes are not the same, they are not repetitive; they are different, and this is a very important part of Lawrence's purpose.

The assertion that each sexual scene plays its special part in a carefully planned development was reiterated both by the leading counsel for the defence and by his witnesses. "The physical relations between (Lady Chatterley) and the man," said Mr. Gardiner (*Trial*, p. 31), "so far from being a repetition, are a slow steady development"; "Any good reading of the book," said Mr. Richard Hoggart (*Trial*, p. 95), "I don't mean a highbrow's reading, a good decent person's reading of the book, shows there is no one the same as the next; each one is a

[1] Not counting two occasions on which Sir Clifford is present.

[2] My references throughout are to the Penguin edition of the novel (*"L.C."*) and to the Penguin summary of the Old Bailey proceedings (*"Trial"*).

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progression of greater honesty and a greater understanding"; and Miss Janet Adam Smith (*Trial*, pp. 156–7) declared that these descriptions were "very relevant and necessary to the theme. They show," she continued, "the two characters having an increasing awareness of each other."

Of these two views about the book, the defence's was surely, in the main, the right one: Lawrence's concern with sex was the reverse of prurient or pornographic; the full descriptions of the sexual act were inserted as a serious literary experiment; and no doubt each episode was introduced in order to show its effect upon Lady Chatterley's awareness of her own sexual nature. But it cannot really be maintained that (as the "experts" quoted above would have us think) the series represents a steady progression, each episode being accompanied by an increase in mutual awareness; rather, Lawrence seems to be anxious to show that varying moods, and changes in currents of feeling of which the individual is not always conscious, may so affect him (or her) that to-day's act of intercourse, even between devoted lovers, may be less satisfying both physically and emotionally, and less "revealing," than yesterday's.

None the less, it certainly appears from a study of the text that Lawrence had a special purpose in introducing each of the eight "sexual" episodes. There is no need to describe each of these episodes in detail; briefly, on the first two occasions (*L.C.*, pp. 120–1, 130–1) the pleasure is almost entirely the man's; it is not until the third encounter (*L.C.*, pp. 138–9) that the experience is a success, both physically and emotionally, for the woman also; the next act of intercourse (*L.C.*, pp. 178–9) is, from the woman's point of view, a miserable failure, but it is followed on the same occasion by two blissful consummations (*L.C.*, pp. 180–3); the fifth occasion (*L.C.*, pp. 217–22) provides opportunity for three acts of intercourse and much sexual talk, which certainly teaches Lady Chatterley a good deal that she did not know before about the person—if not the personality—of her lover. The sixth episode (*L.C.*, p. 231) is a ridiculous animal romp in a rainstorm: "He tipped her up and fell with her on the path, in the roaring silence of the rain, and short and sharp he took her, short and sharp and finished, like an animal."

THE SIGNIFICANT EPISODE, for my purpose, is the seventh, described by Lawrence as "a night of sensual passion" (*L.C.*, p. 258). It comes (to quote Mr. Andrew Shonfield),[3] "at the very climax of the sexual relationship between Mellors and Lady Chatterley ... when they spend a night together, before her departure for Italy, and he 'burns out the shame' in her. He does this" (says Mr. Shonfield) "by various feats of love-making which are undescribed, though we are left in no doubt that what Mellors did was unconventional and even perverse"—and Mr. Shonfield goes on to speculate on the precise kind of perverse sexual treatment that Lady Chatterley had been subjected to, concluding that "it seems a reasonable guess" that she was made the victim of "the same anal perversion" that Mellors' wife, a little later on in the book, says he had practised on her years before.

It can be shown conclusively, I think, by reference to the text, (1) that it is not merely "a reasonable guess" but an absolute certainty that this was what happened on the "night of sensual passion"; (2) that Lawrence, though he chose to depend on hints, innuendoes, and half-hidden clues, meant to leave a careful reader in no doubt about the matter; and (3) that he left in the book equally unequivocal evidence that he himself approved of the practice in question, where the passive party was a woman.

THE CARE that Lawrence took, in his thrice-written novel, to insert (and half-hide) this series of clues, the climactic position he gave to the crucial episode, and the seal of approval he set upon it, all go to show the importance he attached to the matter, and justify a full quotation of his account of the episode itself (pp. 258–9):

> It was a night of sensual passion, in which she was a little startled and almost unwilling: yet pierced again with piercing thrills of sensuality, different, sharper, more terrible than the thrills of tenderness, but, at the moment, more desirable. Though a little frightened, she let him have his way, and the reckless, shameless sensuality shook her to her foundations, stripped her to the very last, and made a different woman of her. It was not really love. It was not voluptuousness. It was sensuality sharp and searing as fire, burning the soul to tinder.
>
> Burning out the shames, the deepest, oldest shames, in the most secret places. It cost her an effort to let him have his way and his will of her. She had to be a passive, consenting thing, like a slave, a physical slave. Yet the passion

[3] See *"Lawrence's Other Censor,"* in ENCOUNTER, September 1961, p. 63.

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licked round her, consuming, and when the sensual flame of it pressed through her bowels and breast, she really thought she was dying: yet a poignant, marvellous death.

She had often wondered what Abélard meant, when he said that in their year of love he and Héloise had passed through all the stages and refinements of passion. The same thing, a thousand years ago: ten thousand years ago! The same on the Greek vases, everywhere! The refinements of passion, the extravagances of sensuality! And necessary, forever necessary, to burn out false shames and smelt out the heaviest ore of the body into purity. With the fire of sheer sensuality.

In the short summer night she learnt so much. She would have thought a woman would have died of shame. Instead of which, the shame died. Shame, which is fear: the deep organic shame, the old, old physical fear which crouches in the bodily roots of us, and can only be chased away by the sensual fire, at last it was roused up and routed by the phallic hunt of the man, and she came to the very heart of the jungle of herself. She felt, now, she had come to the real bed-rock of her nature, and was essentially shameless. She was her sensual self, naked and unashamed. She felt a triumph, almost a vainglory. So! That was how it was! That was life! That was how oneself really was! There was nothing left to disguise or be ashamed of. She shared her ultimate nakedness with a man, another being.

And what a reckless devil the man was! really like a devil! One had to be strong to bear him. But it took some getting at, the core of the physical jungle, the last and deepest recess of organic shame. The phallus alone could explore it. And how he had pressed in on her!

And how, in fear, she had hated it. But how she had really wanted it! She knew now. At the bottom of her soul, fundamentally, she had needed this phallic hunting out, she had secretly wanted it, and she had believed that she would never get it. Now suddenly there it was, and a man was sharing her last and final nakedness, she was shameless.

What liars poets and everybody were! They made one think one wanted sentiment. When what one supremely wanted was this piercing, consuming, rather awful sensuality. To find a man who dared do it, without shame or sin or final misgiving!

What does one particularly remark in this account of Lady Chatterley's feelings? Surely, that there is nowhere any reference to the "sex thrill" (as Lawrence calls it) so fully described as the climax of her reaction on earlier occasions. True, she experiences intense pleasure and excitement, but nothing like the full ecstasy described on (*e.g.*) pp. 138–9 and 181; and her pleasure is submerged in successive waves of fright, reluctance, and shame. These emotions, in the circumstances, are surprising. "She was a little startled and almost unwilling": why startled, after her earlier experiences with Mellors? And why, after her previous enjoyments of the "sex thrill," unwilling? "She... thought a woman would have died of shame"; what had she to be ashamed of? And then, in retrospect, "How, in fear, she had hated it": what had she to be afraid of, or to hate?

Plainly, as Mr. Shonfield suggests, Lady Chatterley had on that night been subjected to some quite unusual treatment at Mellor's hands, and twenty pages later in the book we are given a clue as to what that treatment may have been. Immediately after the "night of sensual passion" Lady Chatterley goes to stay in Venice, and while she is there she learns, by letters from her husband and his nurse, that Mellors' discarded wife, Bertha Coutts, has returned and is spreading slanderous rumours about him in the village. The nurse's letter gives mysterious hints (*L.C.*, p. 275): "She goes about saying the most awful things about him, how he has women at the cottage, and how he behaved to her when they were married, the low, beastly things he did to her, and I don't know what all." Her husband's letter was less equivocal. "He is accused of all unspeakable things," wrote Sir Clifford (*L.C.*, pp. 279–80), "Of course there is really nothing in it. Humanity has always had a strange avidity for unusual sexual postures, and if a man likes to use his wife, as Benvenuto Cellini says, 'in the Italian way,' well that is a matter of taste." That leaves us in no doubt about the nature of the accusation made by Bertha Coutts.[4]

It would be wrong, however, to regard the recriminations of a vindictive woman as affording a proof of what Mellors actually desired, or did; what she said might well be entirely the invention of malice.

But Lawrence has been careful to insert in his text a whole series of indications that Mellors did in fact suffer from an "anal obsession," as a recent contributor to *The Times Literary*

[4] The passages in Cellini's *Life* that Sir Clifford probably had in mind occur on pp. 292–3 of Bacci's edition (Florence, Sansoni, 1901): "Insegniò loro che lei dicessi che io havessi usato seco al modo italiano; qual modo s'intendeva contro natura, cioè in soddomia"; and "La Caterina disse, che io havevo usato seco al modo della Italia... ella vuol dire che tu hai usato seco fuora del vaso dove si fa figliuoli." These passages are more easily accessible in J. A. Symonds' translation (Nimmo, 1885), Vol. II, pp. 206, 209.

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Supplement (4th August, 1961) described it: again and again, the keeper is represented as gloating over what Lawrence calls Lady Chatterley's "haunches," her "posteriors," or her "buttocks," and Mellors himself, in his homelier jargon, her "tail" or "arse."[5] I need (I hope) quote only one specimen (*L.C.*, p. 232): "He watched the beautiful curving drop of her haunches. That fascinated him to-day. How it sloped with a rich down-slope to the heavy roundness of the buttocks!... He stroked her tail with his hand, long and subtly taking in the curves and the globe-fullness. 'Tha's got such a nice tail on thee,' he said, in the throaty caressive dialect. 'Tha's got the nicest arse of anybody. It's the nicest, nicest woman's arse as is!'"

But, it may be said, such appreciation, though outspoken, of these parts of the female body is no proof of perversion: many a sculptor has expressed just such feelings as Mellors' without incurring any suspicion of an ulterior sexual appetite. But Lawrence has hidden in this very passage the key to the nature of Mellors' anal interest: it is the openings concealed thereabouts in the female body that stimulate him: "He laid his hand close and firm over her secret places, in a kind of close greeting" (*L.C.*, p. 233); and, again (*L.C.*, p. 232) "He exquisitely stroked the rounded tail... and his finger-tips touched the two secret openings to her body, time after time, with a soft little brush of fire." The "secret places," the "secret openings," these were what stirred in Mellors the sexual fire—and why? Lawrence gives us the answer in a single phrase (*L.C.*, p. 232): "In between (the buttocks), folded in the secret warmth, the secret entrances!" By choosing the word "entrance," and using it in the plural, Lawrence puts the nature of Mellors' sexual proclivities beyond the possibility of doubt.[6]

Yet a final question remains: the appetite was there in Mellors, but did he actually indulge it, during that "night of sensual passion," on Lady Chatterley's person? And here one must observe that Lawrence throughout his extended description of that episode, is false to the rule that he follows so faithfully in every other "sexual" passage in the book—the rule that prescribed a full and frank account of what occurred. Here, he relies on hints, suggestions, innuendoes, and simply does not tell the reader what actually happened. Yet here again he is careful to give us a clue so that in the end we shall be in no doubt about it. When Lady Chatterley, in Venice, hears what Bertha Coutts has been saying about the keeper, she is far from dismissing the accusations as a baseless slander; on the contrary, she knows well that they are true—and why?: "Connie remembered the last night she had spent with him, and shivered. He had known all that sensuality, even with a Bertha Coutts!" (*L.C.*, p. 276). With this final link, identifying what she herself had experienced with what Bertha Coutts alleged, surely the chain of proof is complete and irrefragable?

"CONNIE remembered the last night she had spent with him, and shivered": Lawrence represents her first reaction to the news as "a revulsion against the whole affair." Indeed, one might have supposed that Lawrence's purpose in introducing this episode was to make plain his disapproval of the kind of sexual conduct it exemplifies, and to show how, as a result of the experience, Lady Chatterley was led to adopt a higher conception of sexual love. But that is not the case. Her revulsion was a passing mood, and it was brought on not by her experiences on that "sensual" night but by the reflection that she had shared those experiences with a "low" woman. The experience itself she treasured: "I loved last night," she had said, on the following morning, to her lover (*L.C.*, p. 262), and it was the memory of it (p. 277) that clinched her resolve to "stick to him" and "not go back on him."

And Lawrence has told us that he agrees with her: sensuality, "sheer sensuality," "reckless, shameless sensuality," was for him an essential element in a full and "valid" sexual relationship between man and woman: he must be a "phallic huntsman" and she a "physical slave." It was in order to show the importance of this element in relations between the sexes that he gave the night of sensual passion its place in that "steady progression" of sexual episodes to which the "experts" bore witness at the trial.

More than this; Lawrence explicitly defended

[5] See, *e.g.*, *L.C.*, pp. 73, 180, 182, 229, 231, 232, 243, 245.

[6] If there is any ambiguity about the kind of "entering" envisaged, it is removed by Lady Chatterley herself: "The phallus alone," she reflected, "could explore it" (*L.C.*, p. 259).

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himself against the criticism that he knew he would provoke, and he did so in what is perhaps the best known and most frequently quoted passage in the book. He puts his defence into the mouth of one of his characters, Duncan Forbes; but there can be little doubt that Forbes is speaking for his creator: "It comes," said Mr. Raymond Williams in his evidence at the trial (p. 134), "through a particular character, and I would judge that it is very much Lawrence's own view." This is the passage (it is quoted by the publishers on the back of the second Penguin edition):

> The more dirt you do on sex the better they like it. But if you believe in your own sex, and won't have it done dirt to, they'll down you. It's the one insane taboo left: sex as a natural and vital thing. They won't have it. You'll see, they'll hound that man down (*L.C.*, p. 277).

It is not clear what is meant, in this context, by "your own sex," by "believing in it," or by the phrase "do dirt to" (or "on"). But the outburst is generally taken to be a vindication of the relationship of Lady Chatterley and Mellors against those who condemn it as unconventional because of the difference in their social standings, and as immoral because adulterous. Society—so the accepted interpretation runs—will "down" those who flout social conventions in the name of love, and if you are open about your love and refuse either to conform or to conceal, you will be treated as outside the pale by "respectable" people: don't be ashamed of loving a gamekeeper, if you really love him; don't be afraid to treat your marriage as annulled if it has ceased to be a true marriage; but do not expect the approval of society for such conduct.

Unfortunately the context does not permit this interpretation of the passage. For Lawrence takes care to make it plain to us that Forbes, so far from referring to such relationships as that of Mellors and Lady Chatterley, was actually unaware that any relationship between them existed. Lady Chatterley did not tell him anything about it: "She didn't say she had been the keeper's lover, she only said she liked him" (*L.C.*, p. 276); on the other hand, she "told Forbes the history of the man"—that is, she told him of the charges his wife was bringing against him, and it is to these, specifically, that Forbes must be referring in his tirade about society and sex. In order that there should be no doubt that this is what he is referring to, Lawrence makes Forbes say it in so many words: "You'll see, they'll hound that man down. And what's he done, after all? If he's made love to his wife all ends on, hasn't he a right to? She ought to be proud of it." (*L.C.*, p. 277.) It is the relationship of Mellors with his own wife, Bertha Coutts, not his relationship with Lady Chatterley, that Forbes refers to. Love "all ends on": that is what Forbes (and, if Mr. Raymond Williams is right, Lawrence) is talking about; "she ought to be proud of it": that is his last word upon it.

"GRANTED that the case is proved," a reader may at this point interpose, "what purpose is served by this demonstration? What makes you want to expose an unpleasant element in a book which you confess that you yourself find distasteful?"

"A liking for honesty and a loathing of humbug" would be a true, and perhaps a sufficient, answer.

If a book is being widely read—and Penguin Books claim to have sold hundreds of thousands of copies of this production—it seems to me desirable that those who read it should be fully enlightened about its meaning. And this answer has all the more force in a case where the author is as important a literary figure as Lawrence, where the book constitutes (to use Mr. Gerald Gardiner's phrase) the "crux of his work," and where the misunderstanding one is seeking to dispel directly concerns a significant element in his message.

But there is more to it than that. If the demonstration is sound, several interesting questions arise concerning the book and its author on the one hand and the trial and the "expert" witnesses on the other.

The first of these questions was raised by Mr. Shonfield in ENCOUNTER, and had already been glanced at by the writer in the *Literary Supplement*. Lawrence was a passionate campaigner for openness and frankness in the treatment of sexual matters: "the truth and the whole truth"—that was his creed—"one should not be ashamed, or afraid, to tell it." And *Lady Chatterley* was, supposedly, the book in which he put most fully into practice what he preached. This devotion to the cause of frankness, of directness, justified, according to the "experts," his use in the book of the "four-

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letter" words,[7] and it is certainly the justification he would himself have pleaded for the detailed descriptions of sexual intercourse that fill so many of its pages.

That being so, it is surely a remarkable fact that, at a climax of the book, Lawrence should (to use his own phrase) "do dirt on" his own sexual creed, becoming covert and oblique instead of being open and direct, and relying on clues and suggestions instead of describing in plain and forthright language (as he does elsewhere in the book) what actually happened. Was he ashamed, or was he afraid? Either way (or, perhaps, both ways) he lost his nerve, so that in the very book in which he made his most violent protest against censorship he became (in Mr. Shonfield's phrase) his own censor; and in the very passage in which he utters his loudest pæan in praise of shamelessness ("She felt a triumph, almost a vainglory.... There was nothing left to disguise or be ashamed of"), shame seems to have overcome him.[8] This failure of integrity, this fundamental dishonesty, not only is interesting as a human trait in Lawrence, but, as Mr. Shonfield suggests, may help to explain the failure of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* as a work of art. That is a question that deserves investigation by a seminar on Lawrence more thorough (if less expensive) than the "expensive and thorough seminar" organised by Penguin Books at the Old Bailey.

SCARCELY LESS PUZZLING is the question that arises concerning the Penguin "seminar" itself. How many of the "expert" witnesses, one wonders, can have understood the real meaning of Lawrence's account of the "night of sensual passion"? It is hardly credible that students of Lawrence who had paid special attention to the book, and who put themselves forward as "experts"[9] at the trial, should all of them have failed completely to appreciate the meaning of this important episode in it. Strange experts they must have been if that was so!

On the other hand, it is difficult to see how a witness who did appreciate the veiled meaning

[7] It was asserted also by witnesses for the defence that Lawrence's purpose in using these words was to uplift them—to "redeem" them, as Miss Gardner put it, or (to use counsel's word) to "purify" them. But in fact Lawrence's purpose, as he himself explained it, seems to have been the reverse. He loathed any attempt to "spiritualise" love, to make it something that involved the whole personality; "personal sympathy and personal love" led inevitably, he believed, to "rage and hatred." "Complete intimacy" was "a bore." "All that weary self-consciousness between a man and a woman!", he makes Lady Chatterley herself exclaim, "A disease!" (*L.C.*, p. 264); "Marriage," he said, "is no marriage that is not basically and permanently phallic." His purpose in using the "taboo" words (as he called them) was to register (so to say) the earthy, physical, phallic nature of the kind of love he was contending for: "If I use the taboo words," he wrote (*A Propos of Lady Chatterley's Lover*, p. 60), "there is a reason. We shall never free the phallic reality from the 'uplift' taint till we give it its own phallic language, and use the obscene words. The greatest blasphemy of all against the phallic reality is this 'lifting it to a higher plane.' "

It is hardly necessary to say that none of the witnesses for the defence referred to this passage.

[8] Perhaps it is relevant to recall that the practice Lawrence was commending is (as I have explained above) a criminal offence, and Lawrence may have thought that commendation of it would increase the likelihood of the book's being seized by the Customs or the police. This fear might be accepted as a reason for omitting the episode entirely, but it hardly explains his introducing it but not using plain terms. By doing that Lawrence surely laid himself open to the charge of wanting to "have it both ways."

[9] It is not clear, in several cases, in what their qualifications as experts consisted: "I was brought up in a very literary family" was the basis (together with a classical scholarship at a girls' college) of one witness's claim to be a literary expert; another, a girl of twenty-one, had failed to get a First Class in English Literature, but had "started to write a novel."

Several were certainly not expert witnesses in the sense of being expert at giving evidence. Here is a specimen question and answer (*Trial*, p. 60): *Q.* "How far, in your view, are the descriptions of sexual intercourse relevant or necessary to the theme or meaning of the book?" *A.* "I think that Lawrence in this book was attempting to bring home to the imaginations of his readers certain aspects of modern society, the failure of relations between men and women, the degraded condition in which many people live." The jury, no doubt, were duly impressed; but it will be seen that the answer bears not the slightest relation to the question asked.

Again, Mr. Gardiner asked a Prebendary (*Trial*, p. 89): "Would it be more or less in accordance with Christian theology if some parts were replaced by asterisks?" The answer was: "It would be less in accordance." Neither counsel nor witness, surely, can have asked himself what theology had to do with the matter. And what is one to make of a religious "expert" who in answer to the question, "Has the word 'phallic' always had a sacred connotation?" replies (*Trial*, p. 162): "I don't know that it has *always* had a sacred connotation, but, like many words taken over from a pagan world, it has been baptised by Christians and made into a sacred word"?

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of this passage could have given an unqualified testimonial to Lawrence's outspokenness and honesty in the description of sexual acts, or how such a witness could have declared that there was nothing perverse or unnatural in Lawrence's attitude towards sex as revealed in the book.

Yet witnesses for the defence repeatedly asserted that a leading purpose of Lawrence in this novel was to vindicate, by example, openness and frankness about sexual intercourse, and not one of them suggested that at any point in it he was untrue to this purpose. And as for the content of Lawrence's sexual doctrine, as distinct from his frankness in describing sexual acts, many of the experts testified to their approval of it in terms which make it difficult to believe that they understood what it was they were approving. A Bishop, for instance, maintained (*Trial*, p. 71) that Lawrence represented the sexual act "as in a real sense something sacred,[10] as in a real sense an act of holy communion"; one Professor declared roundly (*Trial*, p. 147) that his descriptions of sexual intercourse were "never sadistic or perverted," and another (*Trial*, p. 76) that they were "absolutely necessary, to show that a union of human beings must be based on an adequate kind of sexual intercourse—sexual intercourse which was, in his own words, 'valid and precious' "; and a woman editor expressed the view (*Trial*, p. 157) that Lawrence associated sex "with tenderness, with thought for the other person, with the creation of new life... not with violence or cruelty or perversion." Even Mr. Gardiner, in opening his case (*Trial*, p. 34), stated explicitly and without qualification that the book was "a book in which there is no kind of perversion at all." Such language is, to say the least, difficult to reconcile with an understanding of Lawrence's descriptions of the "phallic hunting out" and his praise of love "all ends on."

PARTICULARLY INTRIGUING in this respect is the evidence of Sir William Emrys Williams, who appeared in the witness-box in a dual capacity, both as a literary expert who had read all Lawrence's works[11] and as a director of the defendant company. When he was asked about the significance of the "purple" passages, Sir William replied that "the whole point that (Lawrence) was determined to impress upon us was that love can be a failure, love can be dirty, love can be clean; and these two people go through the whole cycle until they do discover the wholesome fulfilment" (*Trial*, p. 88). As for the "four-letter" words, Sir William thought that to substitute asterisks for them "would make the thing just a dirty book": Lawrence (he said) "wants them in full. He wants no shorthand, he wants no disguise, he wants no concealment" (*Trial*, p. 89). I would cast no doubt on the sincerity of these answers, or their appropriateness to the questions actually asked; but it is not easy to deduce from them how Sir William, if he had been confronted by counsel with the relevant passages, would have explained the "night of sensual passion" ("the wholesome fulfilment") and Lawrence's treatment of it ("no disguise, no concealment"?), and the subsequent vindication of what it really stood for by Forbes—"She ought to be proud of it"—and by Lady Chatterley herself.

AND THAT LEADS TO THE FINAL, and not the least intriguing, question: if the full truth had been made clear and brought home to the witnesses and to the jury, would the verdict in the case have been a different one? Perhaps it is significant in this connection that defending counsel —though, in the words of Mr. Gardiner (*Trial*,

[10] "Sacred" was a word repeatedly used in this connection by the witnesses: "You may think it is significant," said Mr. Gardiner in his closing speech, "that the word 'sacred' should, quite independently and in a different context, have been used by so many of these witnesses" (*Trial*, p. 186).

[11] Asked whether Penguin Books proposed to publish the whole of Lawrence's works, Sir William replied (*Trial*, p. 86): "Not quite the whole. There are two or three which we shall, I think, not publish, such as the *Psycho-analysis of the Unconscious*, simply because it is virtually an unreadable book." Lawrence in fact wrote no book called *The Psycho-analysis of the Unconscious*. Perhaps Sir William conflated in his mind two books—he may have found them both unreadable—*Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *Psycho-analysis and the Unconscious*, neither of which is included in the Penguin series of Lawrence's works.

Some will regret the decision to exclude them: "If the millions of people who read *Lady Chatterley's Lover* would only read his *Psycho-analysis and the Unconscious* and his *Fantasia of the Unconscious*," writes Sir Herbert Read in *Does Pornography Matter?* (Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1961), "there might be some hope of a change of mind and heart that would lead eventually to a new way of education, a new structure of society, and an end to sexual perversion and pornography." From the business point of view, however, *Lady Chatterley* was no doubt a better proposition.

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p. 37), "Every part of the book (was) relevant to the defence"—did not put this passage to their witnesses or refer to it in addressing the jury. Is it fantastic to detect an anxiety on the part of Mr. Jeremy Hutchinson, when examining Mr. Raymond Williams (*Trial*, p. 134), to steer him away from the fatal passage? Did he fear that the witness really understood its meaning and might be going to explain it to the jury? Again, when Mr. Griffith Jones launched out on a quotation from the passage in the closing speech, Mr. Gardiner objected: it had not (he said) been put to any of the witnesses. The Judge over-ruled the objection and then Mr. Griffith Jones let it go, with "I don't know what it means" (*Trial*, p. 223). Did the defence at this point breathe a sigh of heartfelt satisfaction? [12]

What would have been the effect upon the jury of a complete exposition of the truth, one can but speculate. But Mr. C. H. Rolph, the editor of the Penguin summary of the trial, gives us a pointer, based on his own observation of the proceedings: even the unexplained innuendo contained in Mr. Griffith Jones's "not very easy to know what he is driving at," was enough, it seems, to have "visibly shocked some members of the jury" (*Trial*, p. 221), and a similar vague hint a little later evokes from Mr. Rolph the comment, "Again the innuendo, again the shock."

If the prosecution had brought home to the Court Lawrence's commendation of something that—to quote his own words (*L.C.*, p. 258)—"was not really love. It was not voluptuousness. It was sensuality... reckless shameless sensuality," the shock to the jury might have been greater, and if the passages in which he described it had been put squarely to the witnesses who praised him at such length for the "sacredness" and "spirituality" that he abhorred, the verdict might have been a different one. It may well be that the policy of silence on this crucial point saved the day for the defence.

[12] Still more effective use of these passages might have been made by the prosecution if the book (like *The Ladies' Directory* in the case *Regina* v. *Shaw*) had been charged under the Common Law as a public mischief (as, in theory, it seems that it still might be). It would then have been enough, in order to secure a conviction, to prove that it affronted public decency, without showing that it tended to corrupt its readers.

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Abram Tertz

The Icicle

A Winter's Tale

Author's Note

I WRITE THIS STORY as a castaway tells of his distress. Sitting on a piece of wreckage or stranded on a desert island, he throws a bottle with a letter into the stormy sea in the hope that the waves and the wind will bring it to people who will read it and learn the truth long after its poor author is dead.

But the question is: will the bottle ever reach its destination? Will a sailor haul it up by the neck with his strong hand and will he shed tears of pity on the deck of his ship? Or will the seal gradually be corroded by brine, the paper eaten away and the unknown bottle, filled with bitter sea-water, dash against a reef and come to rest motionless on the bottom of the ocean?

My task is even more difficult. Though I have no scientific or literary experience, I want my work to be printed and accorded recognition. Only in this roundabout way can I hope to reach you, Vasili. Oh, Vasili! Believe me when I say that I want not money or honours, but only your understanding. I need no readers except you, though my story will pass through many hands perhaps before it happens to come your way.

What else can I do? The sea of life is vast and the bottle is such a tiny thing, and it will have to drift thousands of miles before it reaches its destination.

Forgive me, Vasili! I do not have your address. I do not even know your surname: I had no time to ask and when I thought of it, it was too late. But I know that, like me, you live adrift in the waves of space and time, and I hope that some day you may go into a second-hand bookshop and happen to see my battered book on the shelf.

Will you remember me? Will your heart miss a beat and will the shadowy images of the past come to life? Will you stretch out a hand of friendship and help?

Vasili, I ask only one favour: find Natasha. You see, she must live somewhere quite close to you. Don't be surprised that she is also called Natasha, though she is completely different from the other Natasha. But I think that their names happen to be the same. Would you believe it, she is also called Natasha! And if you don't recognise her from my description, I hope that your heart will tell you who I mean....

So I beg you, Vasili, find Natasha and marry her as soon as possible, while you're still alive, before it's too late. Marry her without fail, even though she may be older than you and have children—and I believe you have a family too. But never mind. Leave your wife and marry Natasha, as I tell you. You see, this is the only chance of meeting her and if we let it go by, we shall again lose sight of each other....

Don't frown, Vasili. I shall explain everything in a moment. I shall put it all down just as it happened and I shall try to do a good job of writing. Let's hope it comes out in a large edition—it's more likely to reach you like that. It's all right, you needn't worry—I've read a

THIS *new story by the young Russian writer whose unpublished manuscripts come out of the Soviet Union under the* nom de plume *of "Abram Tertz" has been translated by Max Hayward. Mr. Hayward also translated the first Tertz story,* THE TRIAL BEGINS, *which* ENCOUNTER *published in January, 1960; he provides a note on this new manuscript in the "Authors" column of the present number. World copyright; Kultura (Paris).*

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lot of novels and stories and I have a fair idea of how it's done. And the main thing is that I have the time. If it comes to that, what's to stop me becoming a famous writer during the rest of my long life?

And as you follow the story, Vasili, keep a close watch on yourself. Perhaps something will stir in you and you will help the wretched castaway.... And, as you sit with Natasha in some beautiful arbour, you will take her sadly by the waist and say in the words of the poet:

Do not sing, my beauty,
Songs of sad Georgia:
They bring to mind
Another life and a far shore.

Your cruel songs, alas,
Bring back the steppe at night
And the face of a poor girl
Far away in the moonlight.

Seeing you, I forget
The dear, doomed wraith,
But you sing, and once again
I picture it before me.

Incidentally, this was written by the Pushkin you know so well. But you were wrong when you said that Pushkin was shot. He was killed in a duel, by a pistol. I know this for a fact, believe me.

One more thing: should you read my tale of woe to Natasha? Much better read her Pushkin, and love her as I loved her. And be happy.

This is all I ask of you.

I

NATASHA AND I were sitting on a bench in the Tsvetnoi Boulevard. We were quite alone. It was icy underfoot and no one ventured out on to the boulevard, except Natasha and me—because we were in love and were not worried about falling and hurting ourselves.

"Disgusting," I said, "it's enough to drive you mad. If the weather doesn't change by tomorrow and if we don't have snow, I shall refuse to see the New Year in. Have you ever known anything like it at the end of December? Nor have I. It's all these atomic tests and the arms race. Cold in summer and rain in winter. We've had it."

I was going to develop my idea about fall-out in the atmosphere, as a result of which there would be a new ice-age and we should all grow shaggy hair and start breeding mammoths, but Natasha interrupted me. She said that in early childhood she had once seen it snow in the middle of June. This, she assured me, had happened when they were on holiday in the country near Saratov in 1928.

This tale struck me as absolutely fantastic. It was all quite impossible for the simple reason that Natasha was then only two and could not have remembered her snow-fall. Our memory has a limited capacity. And then there was a lot of detail about insects, butterflies, and grandmother....

"Don't pull my leg," I said angrily. "Or have you been deceiving me about your age? I bet you were born in '23, not in '26."

I said this just to tease her, of course. I was a little annoyed because I thought that I knew her inside out. We had been friends for long enough and by this time we had told each other everything we remembered about ourselves, including things one normally tries not to remember and talk about. Although we were not yet married and were not living together, it was now a whole year since I had got her to leave Boris for good, and I met her every day or every other day. And now I suddenly learn that Natasha's life was more eventful than I had supposed. Before she had learned to walk, for instance, she had been playing with matches and had set her hair on fire, and it had burned with a yellow flame—all of which she remembered well.

I was older than her, more intelligent, and more widely read, and I was not one to give any points away. So I started an argument about vague recollections and pressed her all the harder as my chances of winning diminished.

"Now, I remember...," she kept on saying.

"Well, so do I...," I replied.

And I rummaged in my childhood memories, hoping to turn up something long since forgotten. This was probably the psychological cause of the physical changes which came over me that evening and which were shortly to alter the whole of our lives.

NOW, MANY YEARS LATER, I find it difficult to say exactly how it happened. Perhaps I had been prepared for it by the whole course of my previous development and had been predestined, as they say, to go through all the things that I subsequently underwent. I don't know, I don't know.... At that moment, at any rate, I was not thinking about this at all, but was simply battering at the gates of

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memory, trying to force them open and remember the past. Then some fateful barrier suddenly gave way and I hurtled headlong into an abyss with an almost physical, and unpleasant, sensation of falling. I fell down and down and down, at a loss to understand what was going on, and when I came to, my whole surroundings were different and I was not quite the same.

I was in a long ravine which was hemmed in by ranges of bare mountains and flat-topped hills. The bottom was covered with a crust of ice. Trees, also bare, grew along the edge of the ice, at the foot of the sheer cliffs. There were not many of them, but the hollow moan of the wind showed that the forest was not far away. There was a smell of corpses. Rotten branches glowed in large numbers. Though they were probably not rotten branches but bits of the moon which had been torn to pieces by wolves and was now waiting for the moment when its bones would again grow white, luminous flesh and it would rise into the sky to the envious baying of the wolves....

But before I had a chance to wonder about the meaning of all this, I was charged by a monster with a gaping mouth. It moved its unseen legs at enormous speed and I guessed that it had not four, or even five, legs but at least as many as the fingers and toes on my hands and feet. Smaller than a mammoth, it was nevertheless as hefty as the largest bear and when it was close up, I could see that it had a transparent belly, like a fish's bladder, in which tiny humans, swallowed alive, were tossing up and down in the most terrible way. The monster must have been so greedy that it swallowed its victims without chewing them and they went straight to its stomach, still writhing and jumping.

Of course, I am only giving a rough idea, in my own words, of what I felt. At the time, there were no words at all in my head, only conditioned reflexes and various religious throwbacks, as they are now called, and, in my terror, I muttered vows of such a nature that I can't bring myself to put them down on paper.

But I remember that, at that moment, these nonsensical vows had a definite effect and the monster relented, moving off along the cliffs without touching me and throwing up, by way of warning, a shower of electric sparks. I suppose it is only because these sparks appeared to my clouded mind as "electric" that I realised I had been passed by a harmless trolleybus and I was restored to my lost sense of the actual moment.

As it now appeared, I was still quietly sitting on the bench with Natasha, who had noticed nothing, as calm as ever at my side, and the big city, blanketed by the night, was roaring and moaning round about, like a storm-stricken forest.

"If the weather doesn't change," I said, feeling oddly ill at ease, "and if it doesn't snow to-morrow, I shall refuse to see the New Year in."

But I risked no more exploration of my brain. I had been terribly shaken by this trick which my memory had played on me. Trying to keep calm and not to worry I silently breathed in the familiar air with its stench of petrol fumes and shimmering haze of putrescent light from the street-lamps, which faintly resembled moonlight and was undoubtedly of very real electric origin. I kept looking rather anxiously at the houses, the street-lamps, the trees, and the trolley-buses, which every now and then scurried past the houses and the trees, and it was all so real, so like itself and unlike anything else. I also noticed a large woman who was walking over the curved ice-crust of Tsvetnoi Boulevard, swaying like a ballerina as she went.

She was a good way away from us, and it was impossible to tell her age or make out her features. But her figure, heavily built and swaying merrily, somehow suggested to me that she was an old woman who really had at one time danced in the ballet and had even had a success with Admiral Kurbatov in the role of Odette. I had no idea how this knowledge came to me, since I had never seen the woman in my life before, and I imagined it was the result of pure deduction. I had no desire to check my hunch, but I could not rid myself of a feeling that as soon as she came up to the next but one lamp-post, which she was now approaching, the ballerina would have an accident. To be more precise, I felt that she would slip at the very spot foreseen by me and I even wondered whether to give her a warning, but curiosity prevented me and I watched her progress with bated breath. And when she reached the place and fell down, throwing her short arms in the air, I felt a twitch of conscience somewhere deep down, as though I had myself given her a push.

Natasha and I ran to help her to her feet. Frightened out of her wits, the old woman

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just wouldn't get up and kept falling down again with her wet bottom on the icy ground, saying that she couldn't stand on her right leg because the main bone was broken. In a fearful whisper she told us that, as she fell, she had heard a splintering and crushing sound. There was a smell of good port wine from her toothless mouth.

As we struggled with this wheezing heap of flesh, the whole situation at last became clear to me. The old woman was obviously making herself out to be in a sorrier state than she was. There could be no question of a right leg, because she had lost it in an accident thirty years ago and had it replaced, in secret, by a magnificent artificial one, which was now the real object of her concern. I would have sworn, however, that this remarkable contraption, built of aluminium in Berlin at the expense of Admiral Kurbatov, had not been damaged in the slightest, or even scratched during her fall.

"Up you come now, Susanna Ivanovna, you'll get radiculitis," I said sternly to the morbid old girl and finally, to have some effect, I even shouted at her. Soon, however, she was pouring out her gratitude and, reassured as to the sterling quality of German aluminium, she thanked me with typically French effusiveness. It did not strike her as odd that, although we had never met, I addressed her by name. She took it all for granted and repeated over and over again that she was happy to meet such a kind young man who no doubt remembered her from her unforgettable performance of Odette on the stage of the Mariinsky theatre in St. Petersburg.

"Ah, if only I were nineteen again," she exclaimed, and, putting the tips of her ragged gloves to her toothless mouth, she blew me a kiss. Only with great difficulty did we manage to say good-bye, telling her to walk with the greatest care on her shaky legs....

NATASHA LAUGHED a great deal and, of course, quizzed me about how I had come to know this Susanna Ivanovna. I had to invent a vague story about some magazine or other having printed an old photograph of the ballerina when she was young and which had once made a great impression on me during my teenage craze for the history of the Russian theatre. Natasha said she was terribly jealous and with wonderful charm she tried to show it on her face. Then she played the fool and cuddled up to me—she was very affectionate that evening. I did my best to reciprocate....

But I could not get Susanna Ivanovna out of my mind. I kept thinking that the old woman was in for some sort of trouble. No, it would be nothing to do with her legs—I was sure of that. Other ways in which she would soon die cropped up in my mind. For some reason I figured that it would happen in two months' time from cancer of the womb. And my head was swarming with all kinds of other presentiments.

When we were absolutely frozen, Natasha asked how we would get back: on foot or by trolley-bus? It took me a long time to decide. I had no worries about myself, but walking with my Natasha meant almost carrying her, rather as one carries a bagful of eggs from a shop. I tried not to think about eggs breaking.

We went by trolley-bus: it really was very slippery.

II

IT DID in fact begin to snow a bit the next day and the pavements and roadways were covered by a thin blanket. By nightfall one had the illusion that some sort of winter had arrived, bringing cleanliness and order, and overcoming my indignation, I agreed to see the New Year in with Natasha and Boris at a party given by some people I didn't know. It was clear to me that Boris, as the ex-husband, had been asking her to do him this favour for some time. Natasha had been pestering me now for two weeks:

"He's very cut up, you know. It's all right for you and me, but he's in a bad way. Perhaps his only pleasure in life is seeing me now and again. Just seeing me and nothing more. He even suggested that you come with me. And it's in somebody else's place, on neutral ground. They're all strangers to each other...."

I couldn't see why Boris was so ready to put up with my presence. In his place I should never have done such a thing. But anyway, I couldn't care less about his feelings and I didn't want to refuse anything to Natasha—as though I sensed already that it would all soon come to an end.

"All right! To blazes with your Boris and your philanthropy!" I said to Natasha about an hour before midnight. We went off to these people we didn't know, taking a couple of bottles of wine for decency's sake.

As always at these scratch parties, when a random assortment of people come together by chance, time dragged slowly and everyone was

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bored. After shouting out a few toasts and kicking up a bit of a rumpus in honour of the New Year we all somehow collapsed and became uneasily subdued. Everyone of us had probably waited impatiently for this moment and had been looking forward to it for a week, or even a month, and now here we all were at the festive table and it suddenly turns out that we have absolutely nothing to do and it would be far better to go home and make an early night of it. But since so many hopes had been put on the occasion, nobody left and we all sat waiting, staring at each other with sleepy eyes as though we thought that at any moment now one of us would get up and do something to make all our hopes come true.

An exuberant and handsome man of Caucasian origin, with a rakish moustache above his sensual mouth, tried for half an hour to relieve the tedium by telling funny stories about people in lunatic asylums. But when he at last realised that neither his stories, known to everyone ad nauseam, nor his overdone Eastern accent were raising even the faintest of smiles, he stopped grimacing and guffawing, sank into moody silence and pouted his red lips, which were weak and effeminate.

A test-pilot was chatting with his wife, in an exaggeratedly matter-of-fact way, about things to buy for the house, as though they had no chance to discuss this topic elsewhere. For the single men there was nothing for it but to smoke like fiends. The single women, who were uniformly ugly, took it in turns to go to the lavatory, forcing Natasha and me to get up every time and let them through between the table and the sofa.

It was a sheer waste of time for everyone except, perhaps, Boris. Huddling in a far corner, he never once took his imploring love-lorn eyes off Natasha. It was a sickening spectacle. Natasha, sitting at my side with downcast eyes and looking like death, played up to him. I didn't try to get to the bottom of this relationship and drank glass after glass, without eating.

My drunken gaze was willy-nilly drawn to the Christmas tree, on which they at last lit the candles, and I asked for all the other lights in the room to be switched off, so as to give them full scope. They flickered cheerfully with a wonderful spluttering noise, creating round about the festive atmosphere we needed and gradually, with the exception, perhaps, of Boris, we all fell under their spell and huddled up to the tree, which was like some lavishly decorated domestic altar. For a few minutes a festive spirit settled on the house—the spirit, perhaps, which we had sought in coming here and for whose sake it is sometimes worth putting up with the company of people you neither know nor like.

But the candles gradually burnt down and my feeling of unease, which had been partly dispelled by drink and had almost completely disappeared at the sight of the tree, now came back. I watched anxiously as the candles, which had lit up cheerfully all together, now burned out at different intervals and, I would have said, with different shades of expression. I suppose this depended on the length of the wick and other technical details of their manufacture, but for reasons everybody will understand, I was interested and disturbed by another aspect of the business.

I don't consider myself a pessimist, but I must say in all seriousness that if one thinks closely about the essence of life, it is clear that everything ends in death. There's nothing peculiar about this and it would even be undemocratic if any one of us were to survive and keep on living. But, of course, we would all like to, and when one thinks that even, say, a Leonardo da Vinci had to die, one feels quite helpless.

It wouldn't be so bad if there were some equality about it or if it were a matter of some iron law. If, for example, we all left this life in organised fashion: in large collective units and in a definite order, according, say, to one's age-group or nationality. One nation comes to the end of its allotted span and off it goes to make way for the next one. Then, of course, everything would be much simpler and one's inevitable departure would be less upsetting and nerve-racking. On the other hand, the chief complication in one's existence, and hence its piquancy, is that you never know for certain when it will come to an end, so that you always have the possibility of going one better than the next man and outliving him—even if only by an extra month or so. It is this that gives our life its interest, its risks and fears, its stock-exchange atmosphere and great variety.

And so, looking at the candles, which had changed places in my drunken mind with the assembled merrymakers, I observed their different ends with interest and suspense.

Some burned out as gaily as they had lived and even gave a generous spurt of flame,

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brighter than before, at the end. Others started economising half-way through, as if they knew what was coming and hoped to put off the end as long as possible. But this didn't always help them and an occasional thrifty wick would suddenly choke in its own wax a good two inches from the bottom.

There were others which only grasped the full horror of the situation at the very end and began to dart from side to side in their tin holders, casting outsize reflections on the walls and ceiling, entirely using up all their vital juices and gases, and which then suffocated in their own prematurely decomposed remains, their death agony being a most unseemly spectacle.

I NOW UNDERSTAND that I made a great mistake getting absorbed in this game of my overheated brain. But a second, and even graver mistake, which had an effect on my existence just as irreversible as the evening on Tsvetnoi Boulevard, was that I gave in to the temptation of picking out the candle which seemed most suitable and guessing from it the length of my life and the date of my death.

And what do you think happened? While all the candles round me gradually went out, I lived on and on as a humble little flame, and when the room had gone quite dark I still went on smouldering all by myself, having outlived everybody else, much to my astonishment, by at least ten years.

Someone got up to switch on the light. But I said we should go on in the dark until the last candle had completely burned out. And not taking my eyes off it, I counted off the years to which I was entitled: one, two, three, four, five, six....

Altogether, counting in the age already reached, I got to eighty-nine and as I did so, a sister, or it may have been an ordinary nurse, came into the almost dark room and leant over the head of my bed.

A spark of life still smouldered in me. I was dying slowly and quietly, in full possession of my faculties, and I just couldn't make it. Other people round about were snoring and rambling quietly in their sleep. There was a smell of disinfectant and excrement and the nurse, sitting on a hospital stool, was waiting patiently for me to release her. She was very sleepy and yawned out loud, crossing herself, scratching her head, and throwing reproachful glances at me. From time to time she checked whether I had died or not, but, well aware as I was of her good reasons for trying to hurry me up, and of my own thoughtlessness in the matter, I just hadn't the physical strength to tell her in words, or make her understand by some gesture that she could go away. I simply looked at her apologetically and I was overcome by shame and despair in the presence of this good woman, the only person left in the whole world who still had the slightest connection with me—shame at still being alive. I felt so bad that I got up, quickly blew out the candle-end, and switched on the light.

MY DRINKING COMPANIONS, male and female, looked at me questioningly with bleary eyes, as though I had done them, too, some wrong and it was my duty to lighten their presence in my company. Someone, yawning, suggested a game: charades, for instance, or forfeits. And again they all gave me an impatient look, as though I were the master of ceremonies here and it all depended on me. Pulling comic faces I brushed the cobwebs of fear and shame from my face.

"Listen, everybody! Listen, everybody!" I shouted, and snapped my fingers like a light-switch. "You are about to witness a performance by the celebrated clairvoyant and mind-reader! The past is revealed and the future is foretold! Any volunteers now?..."

Of course, nobody at first believed in my gifts, and, indeed, I was myself doubtful. But when I began to fire off facts and dates and various out-of-the-way details in the life of the test-pilot, and he said I was right every time, they were all delighted and astonished, and, interrupting each other all the time, bombarded me with questions....

I would look rapidly at the diagram of somebody's face and immediately give the date of birth, amount of salary, number of identity card, how many abortions. . . . I preferred figures, because nowadays they tell us more about real life than anything.

"And do you foretell the future as well?" asked a girl student from the Institute of Light Industry.

"A bit," I said evasively. "For instance, at your exam next week you'll get top marks in Marxism-Leninism. You needn't bother to prepare: you'll be asked about the Fifth Party Congress and the fourth law of the dialectic."

She clapped her hands and said gleefully that

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she would mug up nothing except these two questions.

"How can you know that?" asked the handsome Georgian. "Who can believe you?"

"Wait a week and check up," I said, slightly offended.

But they couldn't wait and wanted proof there and then of my ability to foretell future events, and I suddenly had an idea:

"All right," I said, "let's wait one minute. In a minute's time I promise you that a bedbug will appear on the wall. You see the engraving over there? A Giorgione, I think. It'll go round in a circle and crawl away to the left under the next frame...."

And soon, just as I had said, the bedbug appeared. It crawled out from under a sleeping Venus and having made the promised circle, wandered on to another girl—one with a broken pitcher. The women shrieked. Somebody said that there was no bedbug—that it was only suggestion on my part. Others said that it was a trained bedbug and that I had surreptitiously let it out from my sleeve. And the sceptical Georgian Apollo said:

"What of it? A bedbug is nothing at all, anybody could see that coming. Let him tell us when we'll have communism in the whole world...."

I LET THAT ONE go by. The Georgian was an agent-provocateur. Looking at him out of the corner of my eye, I could see real female breasts growing rapidly in the space between his collar-bones and his diaphragm. I could soon clearly see his young and girlish, but fully-formed bosom. However, he kept his moustache and other masculine attributes which, in combination with the breasts, gave him the appearance of a real hermaphrodite.

I didn't know what to make of this at first, and I thought it might be the effect of my drunken state and I was glad of an explanation which make it possible to hope that all the odd happenings of the last few days had also been due to some harmless and simple cause. But this hope was short-lived. It was not wine and vodka drunk in large quantities, but other forces that had taken hold of me and given me a distorted image of the surrounding world.

After the Georgian, all the other guests began to change as well. The outlines of their bodies and faces began to waver, reminding one of the oscillating blips on a radar screen. Each line broke up and became blurred, giving birth to dozens of breathing shapes. Many of the women grew beards; people with fair hair went dark and then bald, again grew a new crop of hair; they became covered with wrinkles and then grew young again—so young that they were like children with bandy legs, large heads, and vacant eyes. These, in their turn, began to grow, their bones set and they became fat or thin.

All the same, each of them kept some likeness to the original form, so it was not too difficult for me to identify them and talk with them, though I could no longer be certain about their past or future.

Up to now I had known which one of them was a thief, a bigamist, or the secret daughter of a runaway White-guardist, but at present everything was all mixed up and in flux and I had no means of knowing where one person ended and another began. When a young engineer by the name of Belchikov turned to me politely and asked me to guess the year of his birth, I almost blurted out on the spur of the moment the preposterous reply, contradicting all the laws of nature: 237 B.C.!

This reply came to me involuntarily and automatically, under the influence, evidently, of the changes which had taken place in Belchikov. An ancient fireman's helmet gleamed fleetingly on his head and under his loose-fitting worsted suit there were white sheets in which he had very unskilfully draped his large torso, leaving his legs bare under the trousers. But of course it was not the trousers, but the helmet and some other more elusive features which suggested to me that Belchikov had been born in 237 B.C.

Fortunately I didn't say this aloud. The helmet dissolved into thin air, the sheets billowed, and out stepped a woman of great beauty, no longer all that young, but still completely serviceable—and without drapes. I saw straightaway that she was a prostitute and also, probably, of fairly ancient origin. She moved her whole body invitingly, but I had no time to feast my eyes before the frivolous creature disappeared, giving way to a priest—or it may have been a eunuch. He quivered for a couple of seconds and turned back into a prostitute, but a different one this time and less attractive than the first one. And so it went on: monks and prostitutes changing places and trying to outdo each other, different every time in price and quality, until at last they achieved the status of engineer Belchikov again. He was

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standing in front of me, politely repeating his question:

"Can you guess when I was born, please?"

Before he had time to change from an engineer into something else, I said quickly that he was born on March 1st, 1922, in Semipalatinsk, and that he shouldn't pester me any more with silly questions, adding, for all to hear, that his parents had kept a butcher's shop employing one assistant in Semipalatinsk and were not, as he liked to write in questionnaires, poor peasants. He blushed and took fright, and in his fear he began to tremble and hastily change shape.

All his previous transformations had seemed to take place in the past, in ancient times, or at least in no period later than 1922 A.D. Now, however, these courtesans of his carried on their activities, and austere ascetics cancelled them out and expiated them, at a different and higher stage of historical development, probably foreshadowing the inner conflict in Belchikov's further evolution. Calculating the possible limits of their fleeting existences, I realised that we had come to the middle of the 24th century. But they went on flitting by, suggesting by their behaviour that even in the splendid future we shall not completely rid ourselves either of the humbug of priests or of the frailty of woman, though it will all, of course, assume new social forms and be quite different in appearance....

I HASTEN to say that I am not trying to make a theory of this or to make sly digs at anybody. I am perfectly well aware that every man, even a Leonardo da Vinci, is the product of economic forces which are responsible for everything in the world. To this I would only add that the individual, the character, the personality—or even, if you like, the soul—also have no part in life and are only reflexes of our vision, like the spots we see when we press our eye-balls or look at the bright sun for a long time without blinking.

We are used to seeing people against a background of air, which looks empty and transparent, while the human figure appears to be of great firmness and density. Now, we are wrong to attribute the unvarying density and sharpness of outline of the human silhouette, which comes out particularly well in the bright light of day, to man's inner world and to call this his "character" or "soul." In fact there is no soul, but only a gap in the air through which mutually unconnected psychic substances rush in nervous gusts, changing according to the age and the circumstances.

When I say that whores and priests occupied a prominent place in Belchikov's life, I am far from wanting to hurt the good man's feelings. I am simply pointing out a situation common to all. It wasn't the engineer Belchikov himself, but the person using his name at the moment, or rather the indefinable empty space at present filled with his substance, which at other times gave refuge to completely different and constantly changing substances. Why this happens, I don't know—perhaps to preserve some historical balance.

Anyone who looks closely into himself will easily detect the most unexpected lapses into past and future states, the urge to steal, for instance, or to kill, or to sell oneself for money. I must say that I have sometimes felt even worse impulses in this thing called the soul, and so will you, unless you cheat and abjectly shy off. The main thing is not to be hypocritical, and then you will see that you have no right to say: "He is a thief" and "I am an engineer," because, in fact, there is no such thing as "I" and "He," and we are all thieves and prostitutes, or even worse, perhaps. If you think you are not, then you are just lucky for the time being, but we all were in the past, even if it was a thousand years ago, or we all certainly shall be in the future, as our sweet memories and bitter presentiments never cease to tell us....

I later got the upper hand of my art of seeing further than our nature permits. I learned to check and control myself and to treat people as if they really were confined to the strict limits of their own personalities and biographies. But at the time I felt myself surrounded not by a score, but by at least a couple of hundred moving faces. Frightened of falling into an abyss five hundred, a thousand, or ten thousand years deep, I kept my eyes on the move. The horror of Tsvetnoi Boulevard and my descent into the age of fossil trolley-buses, the shame and disgrace of my recent death imposed caution, but my eyes still darted hither and thither and there was nothing that seemed stable to them, or could be taken at its face value.

AND THEN, IN SEARCH of support, I turned to Natasha, though I knew beforehand that this was wrong. Natasha, after all, was also human and she might develop a moustache, not to mention similar characteristics of an even more

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basic nature. I was not quite clear about the events in store for us and, to be on the safe side, I had avoided looking at her too closely, because I guessed that this was not something to be taken lightly....

All the same, trying to find a resting-place for my eyes, I did look at her and was at first relieved to see no moustache, beard, or other monstrosity which might have ruined her looks. But then, her head was not quite all there. Only force of habit made me think it was, but the more I looked, the more clearly I saw that her skull was grimly missing right down to her neck and the tip of her chin. Yet her body did not fall or slip down, but remained upright in the chair and her fingers straightened invisible hair, performing pirouettes in mid-air.

It was with much trouble and visual adjustment that I reconstituted Natasha's true appearance, fitting her head and face together again, just as a restorer mends a broken vase. But I didn't want to think of fragile vessels cracking and smashing to bits, if one drops them on the pavement, hits them with a lump of ice, or, say, accidentally lets fall on them a hard object from some height. In general I tried to think as little as possible about what had happened, because Natasha was too frail for all this and might once more fail to stand up to a sudden collision with my unstable consciousness.

"Let's go home, Natasha," I said quietly, feeling tired and somehow apathetic. My sense of irreparable loss was so great that I scarcely heard Boris, who suddenly spoke from his corner:

"I say, sorcerer, darling of the Gods," he said with a leer, "try and guess what I was doing last Sunday between ten and eleven!"

These were the only words he spoke and the whole of his pent-up envy, jealousy, and shame was concentrated in this question from the corner. He didn't even spare Natasha and named the day and the hour right to her face—"last Sunday between ten and eleven"—so as to make the sneer even worse and also to try out in practice the range of my powers.

Another time I would have beaten him up on the spot and probably done a lot of other silly things. I might, in my temper, have given up Natasha and returned her to Boris, saying in disgust exactly what I thought of her. But I now knew more about her than he could imagine. Among all our troubles, both present and imminent, it didn't seem to me to matter very much that Natasha had been unfaithful to me from ten to eleven—half-past-ten, to be exact—last Sunday....

Not looking at her, or replying to Boris, I said softly and slowly, as though nothing had happened:

"Let's go home, Natasha. Let's go, please."

She got up at once and walked across the room with me, putting her warm hand round mine. I was grateful for this sign of true affection. What did I care if she was sometimes unfaithful to me, giving in to the pleas and cajolery of her ex-husband? She did it out of pity and force of habit. But she loved only me, she loved me for all she was worth and while she still could.... That's something to be valued in our troubled times.

In the lobby I was buttonholed by the test-pilot who pressed me up against the hat-rack and said he wanted my advice. He asked me in a whisper, out of earshot of his wife, when approximately his end would come. He was worried about whether or not to start a family, and whether it was worthwhile buying a refrigerator.

That night I had sworn never to tell anybody the date of their death in case their sense of the romantic was impaired and they got down-hearted and lost their healthy spirit of adventure. But now I had to make an exception. Death was all in a day's work for a test-pilot and not an object of idle curiosity. So I told him, as man to man, that he had five-and-a-half years to live and would then be vaporised while doing a record speed in the region of the Pacific Ocean, without even realising the technical reason for such a sudden exit.

He was enormously pleased to hear this. Five-and-a-half years seemed a very long time to him. He hadn't reckoned with anything like this, thinking it would all happen much sooner. He could now buy a refrigerator, and enjoy himself with his wife unhindered by contraceptives. He was as pleased as Punch.

"And now own up, old chap," he said hoarsely, shaking with laughter and slapping me on the shoulder, "may as well admit it, that bedbug of yours was trained, wasn't it, like you train a dog? Some leg-pull that was! Come on, let's have the secret, I won't tell anyone...."

This pilot readily believed me when I predicted his death in a rocket in five-and-a-half years' time, but it was beyond his understanding that one could predict the crawling of a bedbug over a wall.

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III

THE WOOD-COCK plummeted from the birch-tree, as though pulled on a string. I pressed the trigger and taking aim, saw that it was sitting on a branch, a great black cock, and looking at Diana. We climbed from our horses and galloped off. Katya in her pink bonnet waves good-bye from the veranda: "Come back safe!" Jumping into the saddle, I run down the steps and pull on my boots. "It's time to get up, master, it'll soon be daybreak," Nikiphor shouts into my ear. I clasp his fat calves in my hands: "Don't leave us for God's sake, I implore you for the sake of your son...." He looks away, white with anger: "Someone might see us, ma'am." I took the scalp between my teeth and started swimming. In the middle of the river I felt sick. With my teeth still clenched, I begin to sink....

"Tell me, Vasili, who is Pushkin?" my wife asks at dinner.

"He was one of those ancient Russian writers, my dear. He was shot five hundred years ago."

"And who is Boldyrev?"

"Another great writer, my dear. He wrote a play called *In the Dark* and a lot of poems. He was shot two hundred years ago."

"You know everything, Vasili," says my wife with a sigh.

I fire a cannon, I shoot with a cross-bow, I shoot with a catapult. They run away. We run and run, on into the town.

"Let's go to the cellar," says Bernardo. "We've got a girl. Unfortunately she's dead, but she's not gone stiff yet."

We go down. The girl is lying belly upwards on the flagstones. Her skirt is pulled up over her head.

"She won't do," I say. "What will the Virgin Mary say?"

"Nothing matters to her now," replies Bernardo.

He takes a board, and places it under her back. I cross myself and lie on her first. Bernardo presses a lever with his foot. The girl rocks under me as though she were alive.

"Get a move on," says Bernardo.

"Shut up, don't disturb me," I answer, and close my eyes....

"I love you, Silvia!"

"I love you, Greta!"

"I love you, Christopher!"

"I love you, Stepan Alekseyevich!"

"I love you, Vasili!"

"I love you, my kitten, my button, my oyster, my sandwich!"

—they say, and kiss me on the lips.

Ugh!

A gadfly is beating against the window. Snow gleams in the sun. The milk is going cold in the glass. Mitya sneezes.

He sneezes once and there is a landslide in the Himalayas, the sky falls in on us and buries us together with our stretchers.

He sneezes a second time and the Church of the Holy Trinity is struck by lightning: it thunders, the barn roof is on fire, the haystacks burn.

He sneezes a third time and there is a flood; the Lutheran priest Zinovi Shwarts, mounted on a cow, ferries chairs in their dust-covers.

"Mitya!" Uncle Saveli says to me, putting down his Moscow *Gazette*, "if you don't stop sneezing, I shall give you a good hiding...."

I SAT AT HOME several days, absorbed in these visions. They came in snatches, without rhyme or reason, and I was unable to sort out my different existences and arrange them in their proper sequence, in order of time. I was also intrigued, from the scientific point of view, by the absence of any connecting links between death and birth. But apparently it was not given to me to know these subterranean stages, and so the whole logic of my transformations escaped me and I couldn't see who was so intent on making a laughing stock of me. At one moment, you see, I was a Red Indian, then an Italian, and then just poor, innocent Mitya Dyatlov who for some unknown reason died at the age of eight towards the end of the 'thirties in the last century....

Only once did I get a peep behind the curtain which came down in the intervals between scenes. I was lying on a table in a bonnet and a muslin dress, in the guise of a fully-fledged corpse prepared for burial. Near the table was my husband, sobbing unashamedly, and my children were standing on tiptoe, peering with horror and curiosity into my face, which had already begun to change. But at the same time, I was still alive and I was looking down at the scene from somewhere on one side, and I cried as well, and shouted at the top of my voice, telling them to wait, because I might still rally and get up. I also asked them to remove the flowers, because they made me feel sick. But they paid no attention and carried my body

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out of the door, feet first, as is the custom, and I ran after them down our marble staircase, shouting to them to wait. Then I lost consciousness....

With this torrent of memories flooding in on me I somehow lost any clear idea of who and where I was. I began to think that I didn't exist and that I was only an infinite series of random episodes which had happened to other people before and after my time. To reassure myself of my authenticity I would creep up to the mirror and look at myself long and hard. But this worked only for a short while.

Men are so made that they never find their appearance quite convincing. When we look in a mirror, we never cease to be amazed: "Is that ghastly reflection really mine?" we asked. "It can't be!" This inability to dissociate ourselves completely from ourselves is one of the most deadly things in life, and, as one who has witnessed his own funeral and just described what it is like, I may say that my feelings at the time were just like the common experience in front of a mirror, but ten times worse. It is the feeling of protest at being carried out somewhere, when all the time you are here inside. I imagine that there is someone inside us who violently objects at every attempt to persuade him that the person he sees in front of him is none other but himself. Hold up to his nose as many mirrors as you like and, however flawless they are, the person locked up inside you will look and wave his arms.

"You must be out of your mind! Do you really think that's me?"

"Well, who is it, then?"

"No, no, no! It's not me! It's not me!" he will squeal, in the face of all the evidence.

It is only pretty women who can fearlessly sit admiring themselves for hours on end. But this is because they are not given to thinking very much, and they look at themselves not through their own eyes, but through the eyes of admirers and customers. Normal, intelligent people, on the other hand, stand up very badly to the ordeal by mirror. The thing is, that mirrors, like death, are contrary to our nature and inspire the same fear, mistrust, and curiosity.

We can scarcely believe that a piece of glass, daubed with some filthy stuff, is capable of faithfully reproducing us in all our profundity, and so we begin to bluster, and pull faces as though to express our scepticism about the apparition defiantly stuck there in front of us. "Damn you!" we say, "Clear off! Disappear! Shoo!"

The awful thing is, though, that, contrary to common sense, he also starts pulling faces and blows at you and mutters right back at you: "Shoo, you idiot, shoo!"

And so you don't know who to believe—him or yourself, and you worry about world problems and have doubts, and make silly faces, until at last you lose your temper with him and go away, consoled at least by the thought that he too has cleared out and the question of your immortality remains open.

Try spending a couple of hours in front of a mirror and you'll see what I mean.

BUT MY DOUBTS were even more agonising.

After I had stood thoughtfully for a few minutes in front of my mirror, the images of all the people who had once lived here and also looked at themselves in mirrors, appeared before me. My own original image, the one I had always known, and could confirm from dozens of photographs, was driven into the background by these highly unprepossessing faces, and it now twitched and leered and squinted, rolled its eyes and snorted, lathered itself for a shave, puffed its cheeks and squeezed out pimples and blackheads, though I myself was doing nothing of the sort and was trying my hardest to keep still and serious. I had to keep a grip on myself for fear that my face would double up with its reflection as it normally did. If I started taking over these alien grimaces, I should become totally unhinged and lose my own identity. So whenever I went to the mirror, I put on a rocklike expression.

I don't know how all these experiments would have ended, if I hadn't had one encounter which showed me all the dangers of playing with these phantoms of memory now threatening my settled existence.

He was a small, brown man, old and wizened, like a bat with folded wings. To obtain a reflection of himself he was using a lump of crystal, which fragmented his tiny figure, as though it wasn't fractured enough already, into many pieces. But then I got a close-up of his head, which was bald and bony with a tight membrane of dark, tanned skin, and the lean, malignant face peered so sharply into mine that I realised he was here and could see me. Yes, I could see him and he could see me, and we froze before each other in fright and astonish-

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ment, for he too had suddenly noticed that I was looking at him, and he was no less startled than I. "My God! Was I once *that*!" was the thought that flashed through my mind, and my wet, cold forehead was touched by a burning memory of the very distant past....

I was in a desert with quartz all around, holding a crystal in my hand. What shall I be like in the seventy-fifth incarnation? Shall I ask? You mustn't! I will! No one will ever know.... And I see myself—a fine, intelligent head with a skin like leather....But what's this? Who's this—white and slimy and bathed in sweat? Just like a snail. How utterly vile! A carcass dressed in rags with a rope round its neck; must have hanged himself. A monster. He's seen me. He's looking! He's looking *from there*! Can he really see me? He can, he can.... His lips are trembling...and this is me, this is me! Is *that* what I shall be like?...

And almost at the same time as I saw him, I saw myself in the mirror against his dark-brown background. I saw myself as he had seen me in his crystal, and the memory of the impression I had then had of my present state came back in a flash—the outlandish jacket, the tie round the neck of a white mis-shapen head....I, with my fine, leathery head, had choked with rage at this jellyfish in a jacket. I rushed away from the crystal (the mirror?) across the desert (the room?) and, falling down on the sand (the bed?), covered my face with my hands. I think he did the same with his face—whether the one like leather or the one like jelly, I just wouldn't know any more....

I was brought out of my absent state by Natasha. She asked with surprise:

"You're sleeping? In broad daylight? Are you ill?" These gentle words of Natasha's were meant for me, because there was nobody in the room apart from us two.

"Yes," I said, eagerly jumping from the bed. "I was sleeping. I'm quite all right and I feel fine. I'm glad you've come, I'm so glad. I love you, I love you so much." We hugged and kissed each other....

NATASHA'S visits during these days were a relief for me. She brought a badly needed dose of reality into the house. Near her I felt stronger and more sure of life, which didn't seem quite so unstable in the company of Natasha with whom, as I firmly knew, I was madly in love. I liked to hear her stories about the professors, the exams, and people's theses (hers was on Turgenev and she was due to graduate this year). And the way she made an omelette from three eggs in five minutes and created an effect of cleanliness and comfort with a serviette, or made a smart apron out of some towel to look like a young housewife, or bit off her thread just near the needle—all this too I liked and it gave me a feeling that everything in the world was in its right and proper place.

As before, however, I avoided looking at her too closely. It wasn't that I feared signs of a danger which could not in any case be prevented, but simply that I didn't want to make havoc of her face, as now regularly happened if I looked too hard. So I kissed her blind, without looking at her, and when we talked I stared at the floor or out of the window.

She noticed this change in me, of course, and thought it was because I knew about her relations with Boris. But neither of us raised any awkward questions, and we both had our reasons. I briefly explained my success as a clairvoyant on New Year's Eve by saying that I had once studied Tom Tit's popular system of scientific experiments and party games. She didn't ask any questions. But she wanted to know more insistently than usual if I had stopped loving her on account of some small thing, and I replied that nothing had changed between us, and to prove it I gave her a hug, looking at the floor or out of the window. Although it was January, there was slush on the ground outside. Icicles hung from neighbouring roofs, and though the caretakers hacked them off almost every day, they grew again like mushrooms. And looking through the window at this sight, which depressed me by its inescapability, I told Natasha that we should leave as soon as possible.

Of course, I didn't say a word about the approaching nineteenth of January or about the threat hanging over us in Gnezdikovski St. from the top of a large ten-storey building which was quite sufficient to kill one frail woman. But having thought it all out, I told Natasha that I intended to take her out of town for a holiday in the heart of the country. There were now five days to go—it was the 15th—and I told her that we mustn't wait any longer and would leave to-day by the night train, for which I already had tickets. However, I had no tickets nor did I have any money, so when Natasha went out to pack, I decided, for want of any other possibility, to have recourse to Boris. I

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figured that he wouldn't dare refuse if I descended on him suddenly and asked without any explanation for a loan of fifteen hundred against a receipt.

In fact, he refused at first, pleading poverty, but he soon changed his mind when I told him in which secret compartment of his desk, and in what denominations he kept his money.

"So you can see right through things? You ought to be a cop," he said with an ugly leer. "Congratulations, incidentally. You remember that girl at the party? She did get top marks in Marxism. Just exactly as you said: the Fifth Party Congress and the fourth law of the dialectic. And Belchikov's been kicked out of the Party—I checked. That business about the shop in Semipalatinsk turned out to be true...."

I was sorry about Belchikov. I didn't want to do him any harm, but at the time I simply hadn't thought of the possible consequences. I had to be careful with Boris, he was capable of any dirty trick. Right now there was a dark cloud of greenish colour curling round his head —a sure sign of depression combined with spite. It enveloped his sunken cheeks and eddied round the top of his head. It looked like tobacco smoke, but Boris didn't smoke.

"Listen," he said ingratiatingly and no longer smiling, "Take the fifteen hundred, you're welcome. But what do you want Natasha for? What good is she to you? With your phenomenal gifts you can have all the women and automobiles you want, you'll be a top-ranking diplomat, an international detective—no one will get away from you. But Natasha will only be a hindrance, she'll ruin your career. She'll sleep with all and sundry. I know her. She sleeps with me. You may be a clairvoyant, but you can't see what's going on under your very nose. She comes running to me every Sunday. Imagine, right here on this sofa...."

And he launched into such intimate details that I asked him to stop. I threatened that otherwise I would tell him all about the illnesses from which he was going to die.

But nothing would stop him. He was choking with passion and was trying to heap shame on Natasha in order to get her back. Furthermore, he boasted terribly, grossly exaggerating in his lurid descriptions of what had, or had not happened.

I must admit that I was now in no mood for accurate prediction. Without the least regard for the truth, I said the first things that came into my head and lied shamelessly—anything to shut him up. I wanted to cause the greatest pain to this puny body which dared to make love to Natasha with such spite and effrontery before my very eyes. Our words crossed like swords, or, to use a different metaphor, like pistol shots exchanged with great rapidity at a short distance:

"Right here on this sofa. Twelve positions. First we lie..."

"First you get T.B. You lose two stone in four months. You're racked by coughing and hope it's bronchitis."

"Third position: she's lying on her side and I'm lying on my side..."

"They remove your ribs. Your right lung's finished. The left one has a cavity. And you've got ulcers. You can neither sit down nor stand up..."

"I stand up and she stands up and we start the..."

"Coughing and vomiting..."

"We kiss and then bite..."

"Sweating!"

"Thighs!"

"Stomach!"

"Breasts!"

"Skeleton!"

"With our backsides!"

"Backside!"

"Right here on the sofa..."

"Here on this sofa..."

"Underneath me!"

"Bedpans!"

"But I like it best when..."

"Skin and bones!"

"When we lie in the sixth position..."

"Bed-sores!"

"Sixth position..."

"Bed-sores! Bed-sores!"

At the sixth position I finished him off. Forgetting the manliness he had just been flaunting, he stuck his fingers in his ears and shrieked like a woman:

A-a-a-a-a-a-a-h! A-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-h!

I went on talking a little about dropsy, but he was behaving very badly, shouting and stamping his feet, and wouldn't listen to any further details about the nasty things I had predicted for him. So, without another word, I pulled out the secret drawer in his desk, counted off fifteen hundred roubles and wrote a receipt.

Boris had quietened down. Without taking his fingers out of his ears, he watched my lips

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in terror. He thought that I might start up again; he looked very ill.

I pushed the receipt under his nose. It said that I would return the fifteen hundred in a month's time. He nodded his agreement in silence. He wasn't going to risk any further argument with me. I said good-bye and hurried off: I felt pretty rotten as well....

I HAD BEEN SEVERELY bruised in the battle with Boris. I was prepared, of course, for what he said and I could distinguish the truth from barefaced lies, but all the same it was painful to be reminded over and over again that he did the same things with her on Sundays as I did with her on week-days. It even occurred to me for a moment that I might go away by myself and let events take their course. But the knowledge that Natasha's life hung by a thread gave me pause and cooled me down....

Making a detour, I turned into Gnezdikovski St. The danger zone had been cordoned off. They were throwing melting snow from the roof of No. 10. Icy missiles struck the asphalt and sent up showers of mud and water. The pavement groaned under the impact and the cannonade echoed through the air. At the risk of getting splashed, gaping onlookers stood and marvelled at the heroism of the caretakers....

But these precautions were fruitless. The icicle was well out of reach. It was still in an embryonic form, about the size of a button, and safely ensconced under the cornice; it was gathering strength for the moment when it would strike. Nobody noticed it and it was coming on nicely.

The only thing was to get as far away as possible from this infernal machine. I went to the station and bought two tickets.

One may ask whether I understood at the time how utterly hopeless the situation was, whether I realised that our efforts were scarcely less futile than those of the caretakers and that we were only preparing the way for events and helping them to keep strictly to their time-table.

The answer is no. I dismissed all such thoughts. It must have been the instinct of self-preservation which made me put up this hopeless fight. Without this, life would be impossible.

I tried to tell myself that my fears were absurd and stupid. This wasn't a war or an epidemic, but a ridiculous icicle with one chance in a million of accidentally hitting its target. Just cross the road and everything would be all right. And anyway, we would be a thousand miles away from here. We would sit it out beyond the Urals and come back only in a month, by which time the icicle would have melted or fallen on the head of some scoundrel who happened to pass this way. If only, I thought, Boris doesn't take it into his head to denounce me and I'm not picked up at the station, and we're not forcibly prevented from getting out of town, away from this unseasonable icy weather.

I thought we should never make it. Only when the train moved off and our carriage jerked and glided away did I breathe freely. I asked for two sets of bedding and while Natasha unpacked her things I sat on one side smoking and looking at her.

The carriage pitched and swayed, but Natasha deftly tucked the pillows into the covers with faded monograms as though she had been doing nothing else all her life. There was so much calm about these preparations, that I leant across to her bent figure and said:

"Natasha," I said, "Natasha, let's get married."

She tucked in the ends of the bedspread in her homely manner, sat down opposite me with one leg under her.

"But you know," she said, "that Boris won't give me a divorce."

"It doesn't matter," I insisted, "from now onwards we'll live together just the same. We'll set up home together in good, healthy fashion. Let's regard this trip as our honeymoon. Agreed?..."

She said nothing, but to dispel all doubt, passed her soft hand over my eyes.

IV

TRAIN! Train with the wings of a bird! Who invented you? None but a quick-witted people could have given you birth! Although no artful craftsman of Tula or Yaroslavl, but the cunning English Stephenson, they say, contrived you for the good of the cause, you are yet mightily well-fitted to our rolling Russian plain and you speed on your way, up hill and down dale, hurtling past the telegraph poles, now faster, now slower, till your head spins and your eyes hurt! Yet if you look more closely, what is it but a stove on wheels or a peasant samovar with a line of waggons in tow? An angry creature at first sight, it's really

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generous and kindhearted. It puffs and blows and labours up any hill you like, grunting now and again by way of warning, but when it gives that piercing, devil-may-care whistle, you know you'd better watch out, if you don't want to be flattened.

Here we are at a station. Frantic women with babies and suitcases climb under the wheels. Others, shifty-eyed and timid, in constant fear of the powers-that-be, of round-ups and fines, sell cucumbers and chicken and potatoes wrapped in bits of cloth to keep them warm and appetising. A legless beggar in a seaman's jersey and his cap in his teeth trundles himself from carriage to carriage on a rough go-cart. There is hot water for making tea and a buffet with sweets, and a faded banner saying *"1st of May"* which has been there since last spring. With one more minute to go, the station-master, stern and watchful, lean and shrivelled by his service to transport, eternally at odds with the goods traffic, paces the platform in his red-banded cap.

Before we know where we are, we're off again. The women and children, the banners and the suitcases, and the last house with the last rags airing on the fence, flash by and again we race through the icy wilderness, tearing along with thudding wheels and creaking timbers, reeking sulphurous smoke, skirting suburbs and, in the words of Gogol, outstripping other nations and states in our headlong course....

I WOKE UP FROM the cold, after Yaroslavl. The carriage was going along at a fair clip and shook slightly. Curled up like a kitten, Natasha was sleeping. I wiped the window and, with my chin comfortably propped on my hand, looked out from the upper bunk at the passing countryside.

We were travelling through a white, immaculate forest and, if the day before we had suffered from the Moscow slush, out here it was proper old-fashioned winter and everything was as clean and neat as in church on the eve of a major feast. The trees, caked with snow and covered with frost, were magnificent. They had the appearance of the coconut palms, fig and banana trees, which probably grow only in India or Brazil and are quite unsuitable for our niggardly climate. And seeing these riches of unknown origin suddenly lavished on us by nature, I thought of the carboniferous period in which, as science shows, Russia, no less than Brazil, had a tropical vegetation which we now burn and send up the chimney in the form of anthracite.

But I was not depressed or driven to despair by the thought of this wastage of our tree-ferns and other giant *pteridophyta*. Their convoluted trunks, their feathery, fan-shaped leaves, their intricate patterns of stars and rings were consumed in the engine's firebox only to be reproduced in snow on both sides of the track. They came back almost before they perished and although they weren't quite the same, there was something about them, something divinely hard and crystalline, which gave an indestructible fern-like quality to all these scraggy birches and pines.

In other words, if one thinks of it logically, nothing perishes in nature; all things are interconnected and leave their mark on each other, solidifying in different forms. Thus, we humans also preserve in our mobile features, in our various habits, in our mannerisms and smiles the fixed characteristics of all those who once lived, as though in catacombs or warrens, in our convoluted souls, leaving behind the debris of their occupation.

UNTIL QUITE RECENTLY this thought had sent a shudder down my spine. My pigmy self had egotistically resisted the interlopers which, without warning, had settled in my head, like lice, threatening a total breakdown of my central nervous system. But now that I was face to face with nature and its manifest order and neatness, the presence of these other beings gave me nothing but consolation and pleasure, and made me aware of my depth, strength, and inner worth. I thought about everything that came into my head as I lay on my stomach on the upper bunk, weighing up my observations of life and giving them a firm philosophical foundation.

It is amazing that science has not yet discovered and given a complete logical proof of the transmigration of souls. Yet there are examples all around us. Take the obvious one of children born with six fingers. The question is: where did the extra finger come from? Medicine has no answer. But you only have to think about it and use your brains a little to see that one of these hidden beings, who is long since dead, has decided to make himself known by seizing his chance and putting an extra finger in someone else's hand, as though to say: here I am! I'm sitting here and I'm fed up and, if

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nothing else, I want to waggle my little finger in the world!

Then there are lunatics. What a gift of second sight they have! A chap walks round with his nose in the air and says: "I am Julius Cæsar." And nobody believes him—nobody, that is, except me. I believe him because I know that he was Julius Cæsar. Well, perhaps not Cæsar himself, but he has been a great military leader of some sort—only he's forgotten who, when, and in which branch of the forces....

But we don't have to take these extreme cases. Is there any one of us—even the most quiet, shy, and frightened comrade—who hasn't at one time or another experienced a moment of courage, inspiration, or statesmanship? Well, there you have it! Perhaps it's Clovis or Byron coming to life in us for one brief instant, but we go on living all unaware....

Or perhaps it is Leonardo da Vinci himself!?...

I won't press the point about Leonardo. I'll make a concession there. I'm concerned with the principle, not with Leonardo da Vinci. It's not myself I'm worried about. I have had more than enough already: Greta, Stepan Alekseyevich (the one who shot the woodcock), innocent little Mitya Dyatlov who died when he was eight years old at the end of the 'thirties of the last century.... There's no end of them.... All the same it would be nice, in addition to Mitya and Greta, to have somebody, shall we say, like Byron.... What fun it would be, damn it all, to walk down the Tsvetnoi Boulevard as a diabolic Lord Byron, eyeing the scene with that rather unusual Byronic look!...

After history, I thought of other subjects we did at school: geography, zoology.... They say that the human embryo goes through various stages. First, it's a fish, then apparently an amphibian, and after that it gradually grows into something like an ape.... What do you make of that? So fish, and even frogs, were given some chance of jumping around and showing off their paces in my body. Only I can now see that our old teacher didn't get round to telling me that these are not just abstract stages that my organism went through while it was an imbecile embryo gradually forming in my mother's womb. In those golden days I was twin and partner, as it were, to some one quite specific living carp which had perhaps swum in the river Amazon eighteen million years ago. And all other fish, every one of them, found a home in my contemporaries.

This theory—the only one, perhaps, capable of satisfying a mature mind—grew up as we travelled along in the train. Inwardly fortified by this framework of impregnable arguments, I lay on my upper bunk and mused about infinity, immortality, and equality. For now I was firmly convinced that none of us will ever disappear and in the words of the song *"will never and nowhere go under."* We shall simply move to other, and, perhaps, even more comfortable quarters, the whole lot of us together: Mitya Dyatlov, Greta, Stepan Alekseyevich, and the fish. Only we mustn't forget to take Byron!

We shall settle inside some roomy citizen of the future and I think that he will not be indifferent to us. He will be a polite man of tact and advanced views and the science of these progressive times to come will have told him the whole story. And so, as he sits by his window on a quiet summer evening, he will suddenly feel a restless stirring in his soul.

His breast will suddenly brim over with certain emotions and fantastic ideas will come into his tired head. At first he will be surprised and uneasy, but then he will remember about migrant souls and say:

"Ah, it's you, old pal! I know who you are. How are things? Greetings to Clovis and Leonardo da Vinci!"

Hey! You there, man of the future! Listen to what I say! Don't forget to remember me on that quiet summer evening. Look, I'm smiling at you, I'm smiling in you, I'm smiling through you. How can I be dead if I breathe in every quiver of your hand!?

Here I am! You think I don't exist? You think I've disappeared forever? Wait! The dead are singing in your body, dead souls are droning in your nerves. Just listen! It's like bees buzzing in a hive or the hum of telegraph wires carrying news round the world. We were people too, we also laughed and cried. So look back at us!

I want to warn you, not out of malice or envy, but only out of friendship and fellow-feeling, that you too will die. And you will come to us as an equal to equals, and we shall fly on and on into unknown reaches of time and space! This I promise you.

SUNK IN THESE THOUGHTS I had quite forgotten about Natasha, or rather, I had stopped thinking and worrying about her and remembered only subconsciously that she was next to me, unfailingly the same as she had always been for me—my lovely Natasha and

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no one else. And though I would have admitted in theory that there were also other beings inside her, I somehow didn't want to know about it and dismissed the thought of its possibility. My imagination, unbridled as it was, kept her as the one and only, indivisible Natasha, untouched and eternal, and it superstitiously avoided this delicate ground. Even as I mentally planned our happy life together, I fought shy of the details and tried not to go beyond the moment when Natasha would wake up and ask me to have breakfast.

How pleasant it is to eat your breakfast in a train! And whatever you do, you're on the move! Look out of the window, or turn away from it, you're still travelling just the same. Read, smoke, or pick your teeth, but all the time you're going on and on, and not a moment of your life is wasted.

And all the other wonderful things about a train! The spittoons screwed to the floor, the curved door-handles (you just press and it opens!), the cool, vaguely unsettling draught from the lavatory, the faint whiff of rather bitter but well-brewed tea!

To warm up and put myself in an even happier frame of mind I drank a glass of wine and ate something with it. Natasha was astonished at my appetite; I ate enough for half-a-dozen people.

I wasn't all that hungry but, for the first time in my life, I felt a curious need to swallow. It wasn't so much a matter of eating as of simply swallowing, of bolting things down. It was as though a bunch of children, of various ages, were feeding together with me, and every time I put a bit of something down my throat, I said to myself:

"This is for you, this is for me, this is for you—and this is for me...."

I tried to be absolutely fair. I even gave a dried-out end of salami to that nasty wizened old man with the dark skin who had for some reason taken such an instant dislike to me, and I said, "Eat that, and keep quiet!"

But I had a particular fondness for Mitya Dyatlov, of course, the poor orphan; he was such a playful, mischievous kid. He kept asking me for some wine, but I refused, of course, because he was still too young. And then what do you think the little rascal did? Natasha had laid out some sweets, he caught sight of them and started shouting for all he was worth:

"Give me some! Give me some! I want some! I want some!" I shouted in a strange, squeaky voice like a child's and snatched three of them at once from the table.

Natasha laughed uneasily. But I pulled myself together and passed it off as a joke. And I punished Mitya for his prank: I gave the sweets to another youngster—I can't say exactly which one, but it may have been my first-born, the primordial little oaf who had got so scared at the meeting with the trolley-bus on New Year's Eve. He sucked them gratefully, grunting like a baby bear....

"Natasha," I said, after a while, "do you notice anything funny about me?"

"What do you mean?" she asked, and looked at me as though she thought it was me who had seen something odd about her.

"It's nothing, really.... But don't you think I've got a bit fatter than I was? ..."

And I drew my hands round an imaginary figure in the air to try and give an idea of the fullness inside me....

"You always start imagining things when you've had a bit to drink," she said in an anxious tone of voice, and I knew she would now ask me how I felt about her....

"Do you still love me?"

"Of course I do! I still feel exactly the same about you."

"What do you say?"

"I say I still feel just the same about you," I replied irritably, sorry that I had started this conversation.

ONE HAS ONLY to start talking or thinking about something for it to happen. I had noticed this a long time before. Perhaps my predictions only come true because there's no escaping what is known beforehand, and if we didn't know beforehand what's going to happen to us, then it simply wouldn't happen....

"Natasha!" I said imploringly, "I love you, Natasha! I love you more than ever before! I will never, never leave you!"

I wanted to put my arm around her and break off the conversation with a long kiss, since we had the compartment to ourselves and could kiss as much as we liked, not worrying about anything.

"Wait!" she said, and wiped her lips. "Oh, if only you knew.... I've got to tell you something...."

"You don't have to tell me.... I know everything. Look over there, instead, at that house we're just passing. A wonderful little house

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with a roof and a chimney with smoke coming out. We ought to live in a house like that. We'd go and fetch the bread and paraffin on skis. Until the children grow up, I mean. We'll have a son or a daughter—whichever we please. Personally I'm all set to be a father. I've got the same feeling inside me that I suppose pregnant women have...."

She didn't get my meaning and didn't even look at the house, which had now gone by. She just couldn't wait to put her mind at rest and tell me what I knew perfectly well without her owning up to it and was better left unsaid if we didn't want to have trouble. I had never reproached her and had kept my feelings of jealousy in check, even to a certain extent limiting my mind-reading powers—anything to keep her alive and well—and the least she could have done would have been to wait a little before telling me about her affair with Boris.

And what could she tell me that I didn't know already? All she said, playing it down a little, was that she had once on the spur of the moment gone further with him than he deserved and now regretted it bitterly. But her timid, tearful words were enough to stir up my thoughts and send them off in this direction. No sooner had Boris' name been spoken than it occurred to me that he would scarcely have let us go just like that, and that people would be on our heels at any moment. The evening before he had got moving and denounced me to the authorities who would certainly intervene and spoil everything. The moment this thought crossed my mind I understood that an unavoidable disaster was lurking somewhere close by and that I had known about it all the time, and that I had only been fooling myself by pretending that everything was all right.

"Please don't get the wrong idea," Natasha said, sobbing in my arms. "I love you and I hate Boris! But I think I'm pregnant, and I don't know who it is. Do whatever you like...."

God, this was really the limit! What the hell did I care about her goings-on with Boris! Who cared which one of us it was? Hadn't I been going to tell her that I was willing to take responsibility for her pregnancy, as long as she didn't talk to me about Boris and attract the attention of the four people in uniform who were now going through the carriages and checking people's documents?

They had evidently got on after Yaroslav and had been gradually getting closer to us as they moved through, checking up on the passengers. They were now only three carriages away and although I couldn't make out everything at such a distance, I knew well enough who they were looking for and the nature of the instructions in the breast pocket of their chief who, for some reason, was called Sysoyev.

And there were four more men—I had only just noticed this—moving up from the other end of the train and going through the passengers with a fine comb. We were in the middle. They were closing in from both sides.

"Natasha! Stop crying! That doesn't matter at all. But tell me, why did you phone Boris just before we left? Did you tell him the number of our compartment? No? Well, that's something to be thankful for."

THERE WAS NO TIME to explain things to her. I was somehow confused and my mind wouldn't work. All my conflicting feelings—all the parasites travelling on my ticket—got into a flutter and pulled me in different directions. Some—probably those who had been women—told me to leave Natasha straight away —("Why get involved with trash like her?") and clear off while the going was good. Others were worried most about the money, spent all for nothing, which had to be returned in a month. Someone else advised me to offer armed resistance.

I couldn't make out who this was. Was it Stepan Alekseyevich with his aristocratic bravado? Or the Red Indian who had gone under with the scalp in his teeth? Or was it some soldier, as yet unidentified, buried inside me together with the cowards and the pinch-pennies? Dear old unknown soldier!...

Armed with his moral and physical support, I immediately choked off the shabby mob: "Shut up, you blighters, I'll hang the lot of you!" I muttered through my teeth, and when they had quietened down and stopped hissing, one could hear the rattle of the wheels and the creak of the wooden partitions which muffled the creak of boots and the distant murmur of the people who were coming through looking for me.

I then said to Natasha that we should get out of the train, but she didn't ask how—we were going along at full tilt over the snowy plain—all she wanted to know was: what about the suitcases? I grabbed her by the hand and dragged her along the corridor. Luckily for us there was nobody by the door at the end and, as I had foreseen, it was not locked, as they

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usually are, to stop people jumping out and crippling themselves. The cold wind hit us right in the face.

"Jump! Jump!" I shouted to Natasha, making myself heard above the noise of the wheels. "Snowdrifts—you won't get hurt. Honest! Jump, I'm telling you!..."

But she was afraid to jump from such a height and at such a speed, and she didn't know that there was nothing to be afraid of here, that she was guaranteed against harm and that, jump as much as she liked, nothing at all would happen to her. I would have jumped first, to show her the way, but I feared that if I did, she would go on without me and then I should have no way at all of helping her.

The four men in uniform were going through our carriage and were getting near to the end of the corridor. I began to push Natasha and hit her across the hands, telling her to jump straightaway, but she wouldn't listen to me and hung on with her hands, and she kept saying that I shouldn't throw her out and she no longer had anything to do with Boris.

Perhaps I would have managed to push her out and jump after her at the last moment, but the people who had been tipped off by Boris rushed us and had us surrounded in a second. They fired orders and questions at us: who were we? what were we doing here? and why was the door open? I said we had come to get a breath of fresh air because my wife wasn't feeling very well.

Natasha was trembling all over. She couldn't get rid of an odd feeling that I had wanted to push her under the wheels of the train. However, she confirmed that we had come to get a breath of fresh air and once again I was impressed by her character.... But all this was meaningless now. I had been recognised.

"YOU'RE UNDER ARREST. I must ask you to come with me," said the man called Sysoyev. He put my identity papers in his breast pocket and handed me a document which I didn't bother to read. I had a feeling all this had happened to me before and even Sysoyev's cape, a splendid fur-lined officer's cape, seemed familiar. I had never seen Sysoyev, or his white cape, in my life, but I just knew that the whole thing would be like this, this was how I had pictured it from the start.

The sad thing was that they didn't arrest Natasha as well. They told her she could go where she pleased and, saying she would return to Moscow, she began to weep for the third or fourth time that morning.

"Don't think," she said, "that I'm going back to Boris. I shall wait for you. They'll soon let you go. It's a mistake, I'm sure of it. Don't think...."

They took us off the train at the next station. It was a dry and frosty morning. Half the passengers came running along to see who had been caught. A peasant woman in a sheepskin coat crossed herself in my direction, as though I was a corpse. The eight men in uniform escorted me proudly and respectfully, like a distinguished visitor from abroad. At least four of them were gripping the ribbed butts of the revolvers in their coat-pockets.

"You can say good-bye to your friend," said Sysoyev. "And as for you, lady, I suggest you rest up on the station here. The train back to Moscow doesn't go till the evening."

I put my arms round Natasha and told her quietly and clearly the last thing I could at this fateful moment:

"Natasha! Think what you like about me, call me a madman, if you like, but remember one thing: when you get back, keep away from Gnezdnikovsky. You know the street—near Pushkin Square and Gorki Street. Don't go there on any account and be particularly careful on Sunday, the nineteenth of January. Remember: the nineteenth!—in four days' time. At ten in the morning. Stay at home. If the worst comes to the worst and you go to Boris.... Don't shake your head—I know. The nineteenth is a Sunday and you may want to go to Boris. Well, so what! Nothing to it, I don't mind at all. Only don't go through Gnezdnikovsky. It's quite out of your way, and you'll be late into the bargain—you're always there from ten to half-past. Well, that's all right. You'll have plenty to do and time will go quickly. Stay till twelve if you like. It doesn't matter now. But whatever you do, remember: Gnezdnikovsky . . . the nineteenth . . . ten o'clock in the morning...."

No sooner had I told about this thing that had been on my mind for so long than I realised I shouldn't have said it. If I hadn't told her not to, perhaps it would never have occurred to her to go there, but now I had prepared the way myself and it was too late to do anything about it.

"What Gnezdikovsky Street?" she asked. "What are you getting at? I've never been anywhere near the place!..."

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I just shrugged, screwed up my eyes in pain and anger and shouted "Let's go!" to my escort. After fifty yards or so I looked back. Natasha was still standing there, but I couldn't see the expression on her face. Her head was cut off from me by a footbridge.... But the rest of her body, from the breast downwards, was visible. She had kept her figure perfectly and there was no obvious sign of any pregnancy. All I could see was a dark spot in her womb, which was as firm and pure as crystal.

"What's all this about?" I thought. "Why doesn't this rotten seed planted by Boris grow and develop according to the laws of nature? I've said I'll adopt the child, no question of it.... So why is there no little fish to wave good-bye to me with its tiny fin? ..."

But no matter how hard I looked, the spot would not grow or adopt the required shape. It was just as dark and unchanging as ever, and at last my eyes began to hurt from the effort.

"Where's the helicopter?" I asked Sysoyev, who was waiting respectfully for me to get over my grief. "You're always late, Captain Sysoyev...."

"It will be here in half an hour!" he said, and suddenly saluted, flapping his cape.

V

I CAME into the hands of Colonel Tarasov. My acquaintance with this splendid and straightforward man began with his spinning a closed cigarette-case in the air and barking gleefully at me:

"Come on now! Look sharp! Can you count? How many?"

Thinking that he had in mind the reproduction of Vasnetsov's *Three Knights* engraved on the lid, I said that there were exactly three men sitting on three horses.

"How many cigarettes, I'm asking you!" he roared, and seeing now what sort of problem it was that interested him, I named the number of cigarettes—I no longer remember exactly what it was—contained in the case engraved with three knights. Having checked my ability to get my bearings in space and to see objects through a layer five millimetres thick, the Colonel went on to experiments involving time. He aimed a handy-looking Browning at my face and asked in how many seconds I expected him to shoot.

I found this very funny and, swaying in my chair, I laughed and laughed until the colonel's hand had gone numb from holding the heavy revolver and his eyes were all bloodshot from the strain of trying to keep it trained on my face as it went to and fro. Then I said:

"In the first place, my dear colonel, your gun is not loaded. In the second place, you answer for my person with your life and you wouldn't want to throw it away for a mere experiment. And in the third place," I went on, "you will now put the gun back in your desk and start talking to me in a different tone. Otherwise I shall refuse the practical co-operation which you are about to suggest...."

The colonel looked hurt and said "h'm." He put the revolver in a drawer and dropped his familiar tone. Thus we became friends.

There was no point in my hiding from him my unusual psychological make-up. There was a complete list, drawn up by Boris for a lengthy report, of all the feats of clairvoyance performed by me in public on New Year's Eve. This document, checked by the interrogation of eye-witnesses, had provided the excuse for my detention as a person "capable of rendering services in the national interest" and had come to Colonel Tarasov through the appropriate official channels for his further investigation and action.

I didn't want to set myself up as a kind of miracle-man, but I thought it my duty as a citizen to help Colonel Tarasov in his grand strategy. And I may say without false modesty that during the brief time I worked with him, I did quite a bit for the benefit of the country and peace-loving mankind as a whole. For instance, I de-cyphered a few mysterious telegrams sent by a certain foreign correspondent to a government-inspired newspaper abroad. I also foretold the fall of the Cabinet, forty-eight hours before it happened, in a certain insignificant country and thus enabled our diplomats to make their financial overtures in good time.... I can't go into these matters in any great detail because of their highly secret nature. All I can say is that I made some contribution, that my work was not in vain, and that I did my bit for the cause we all have so much at heart....

At first my chief was very pleased with me, and to show his heart-felt appreciation, he said:

"You'll go a long way. In a week or two, you'll see, you and I will uncover a major conspiracy. There hasn't been one now for ages.... And with your help we'll finish the investiga-

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tion in no time.... We'll get the whole lot right away!"

This plan didn't appeal to me very much—not that I have any sympathy for plotters, but simply that all my instincts as an intellectual were against tracking people down and investigating them by means of telepathy and clairvoyance. I had always thought that in the catching of a criminal there should be some romantic, or if you like, sporting element. Otherwise secret service and detective work will just become a mere routine of rounding people up and thus lose all its glamour for the younger generation. Moreover, I was still very mindful of how I had recently been hunted down and I was not at all anxious to encourage the chief in these long-term ideas.

"Wait a minute, Colonel. Even my knowledge has its limits. I'm afraid spies are out. They're awfully scattered and difficult to keep track of.... I should think about one in every hundred of the population is a spy. Not bad really. Quite a small percentage."

"But just put your mind to it! Give it everything you've got! The whole country is looking to you with hope and telling you to do your duty! It feeds and clothes you... free education! kindergartens, crèches, reading-rooms! Nothing's too much for the dear old country, bugger you! There's *nothing* I wouldn't do!..."

The colonel's eyes were moist. He clawed at the buttons on the breast of his tunic and ground his teeth. Listening to all this, I felt quite ashamed.

I HAD INDEED been given every amenity one could possibly dream of in prison: comfortable furniture, a lamp-shade with tassels, and a bathroom to myself. Four young men, none of lower rank than lieutenant, watched over me and fulfilled at the same time the functions of chambermaid, secretary, dish-washer, and hairdresser respectively. Special messengers were on duty night and day, ready to rush at any moment to the record office, libraries, and photographic archives in order to fetch anything that might be of the slightest help to me.

And the food was up to restaurant standard: three-course meals and liqueur with the coffee. True, there was some limitation on the cognac—only one bottle a day—but whenever Colonel Tarasov came in for a chat—not to interrogate me or pick my brains, but just to sit quietly after our labours and relax—the ration was increased. He thought, quite rightly, that cognac heightened my perceptions and brought out the best in me.

I remember the first time we sat up late over a bottle of *Ararat*. At midnight he called for a map of the world and asked me to do a bit of forecasting. At first everything went well. We polished off Europe. But then for some reason he kept veering off southwards to the mountains and beyond, past Ararat and Gibraltar. I could scarcely keep up with him and, quite confused as to the various troop movements involved, I lost track of who was fighting whom.... At one moment I did manage to correct the situation by nudging the Colonel's elbow and we broke out to the sea-coast.

This was on the other side of the equator, fifty years' hence, and the Colonel, putting his faith in some Negro reinforcements, was going to make an immediate landing in Australia!

"You must be mad! In the first place, we're not here, but over here. Take your finger away. And then, Colonel, you're forgetting about Madagascar. The Japs are there. What are you pointing here for? We can't come here, we shall lose the whole campaign! We can't, I tell you. After all, I know better than you what'll happen...."

He looked at me with tearful eyes and said hoarsely:

"But what about Australia?..."

"What's Australia got to do with it?"

"You mean we let Australia go to blazes?"

"Look here now, we can't do everything at once. Australia's turn will come when there's another opening. At a higher stage of historical development...."

The Colonel slid forward on his elbows across the table:

"Can't you speed things up, old man? Just a little bit..."

"Speed what up?"

"Well, this development business.... What are we waiting for? Make an effort! Come on, for my sake, as a friend, not by way of duty. Please, be a pal, be a good fellow, help Australia on a bit..."

He was evidently confusing me with God. If I was in some degree omniscient, there was no question of my being omnipotent as well. What can I do? I know everything and can do nothing. And the more I know the worse it is, and the fewer legitimate reasons I have for

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doing anything or putting my faith in anybody....

Of course, I was lucky to be with the Colonel rather than one of those liberal-minded university types (you know the sort I mean: very keen and Jews mostly) who would have plagued the life out of me about freewill and the role of the personality in history. But I've been saying for a long time and I can only emphasise once more that the personality plays no particular part at all. And how can a man have any kind of independence when everything is pre-ordained? I have to stand up and I stand up. I have to lie down and I lie down. I don't want to, but I do. Because that is the law, that is historical inevitability. Try as much as you like to get out of it, but you'll still have to lie down in the end. And suppose I do try to get up again on the sly, all it means is that permission has been received and I'm only obeying the almighty will.

I have no control over myself, I have no more will or spirit than a stone, and in my more serene moments I have only one prayer: "Lord, hold me up and do not abandon me! Lord, I am a stone in thy hand.... Gather thy strength and throw this stone with all thy might at whomsoever thou will!..."

"Very well," said the Colonel, when I had revealed my complete inability to control the course of events. "You don't want Australia, well let's have New Zealand. Just two little islands. No trouble at all."

I repeated, quoting the dialectic, that we can neither improve on history nor detract from it, otherwise we should have chaos and subjective idealism.

"But we'll only make a tiny little improvement," said the Colonel in a whining voice. "No one will ever notice. Come on now, what does it cost you?... Be a pal, New Zealand!... We've liberated Holland—but New Zealand can go to blazes, you think?"

THE DIALECTIC WAS NOT Colonel Tarasov's strong point, but he had a great and insatiable soul. Perhaps the soul of Tamerlane, Peter the Great, or Friedrich Nietzsche—I turned over the various possibilities in my mind....

But on closer inspection, things turned out to be rather different. When I looked a little more carefully into the recesses of his large, heavy-weight body, I saw drawn up behind him policemen of various ranks, guards, and overseers.

They went back to the most ancient civilisations and they emerged from the darkness in such strict order that at first I thought they all had the same face, but then I saw what it was: each was of a higher rank than his predecessor, as though they had been born specially for the purpose of rising by one degree during their lives. The last had been a lieutenant-colonel in the reign of Alexander the Second. This was the closest in rank to Colonel Tarasov, who thus stood at the apex of the whole evolution.

But as they entered history, Tarasov and all those before him had had to begin from the beginning, working their way up from the humblest of door-keepers through all the consecutive stages of an age-long hierarchical development. It was not necessary to look into the future to see that this steady advance would not end with the rank of colonel, which was only a pause on the road to even greater heights.

I felt that Australia and New Zealand, not to mention other lesser objectives, must eventually yield to this irresistible urge for self-improvement, to this single-minded concentration of all effort on progress, and when Colonel Tarasov for the second or third time before we said good-night, begged for my support in the coming battle for New Zealand, I began to weaken. I promised to think about it and look for a way—with all due respect to the materialistic dialectic—of hastening the development of these islands, which are so out of touch with real life.

"But," I said, "I should also like a little help in a rather delicate matter concerning a woman I am living with, though I'm quite willing at any time to go through all the legal formalities with her."

"Have ten wives and live with them, if you like!" shouted Tarasov with such genuine warmth that I felt somehow ashamed about my little stratagem. But I put off telling him about Natasha, to allow him to consider the business more soberly after a good night's sleep. My head had also suffered a great deal from his powerful *Ararat* and before I got to sleep, I felt as though I was being rocked in a cradle....

THAT NIGHT I had a dream—the sort of dream which probably has some sort of meaning for one's life. I dreamt that I was walking along a road and ran into a military patrol in the darkness. I must have had something on my conscience (perhaps I was hiding

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from somebody or had escaped from somewhere), because the thought which flashed through my mind was: "They've shot Pushkin and Boldyrev and now it's my turn." But before they could detain me and check my papers, I made off into the darkness, though they shouted at me to stop and even, I think, opened fire at random in my direction, not bothering, however, to chase me along the bad road.

A couple of times I tripped and fell flat on the ground, but it was all right—I got up again and went on, glad that I had successfully avoided a show-down with a military tribunal. My body glided easily past walls and fences which suggested that I was not far from home and would soon see all those I hadn't seen for so long. But instead of going home, I decided first to look in on a woman I knew and I was soon under her window and climbed noiselessly up to the balcony without even disturbing the dog which slept downstairs.

Natasha was alone and she was reading a book by the light of a table-lamp, and I remember thinking in my dream that all my fears had been for nothing, since she was here in such splendid shape. And I was suddenly curious about the book she was reading, because at one time, before the war, I had tried to form her tastes and had given her—much to my wife's annoyance—Pushkin's and Boldyrev's verse. But now she had in her lap my own very tattered copy of an old story—I don't now remember the exact title—which I had bought before the war to complete a set and which was the work of an ancient author more or less of Pushkin's time. "I must re-read it, can't remember it... maybe it's of some interest.... But surely Natasha isn't still using my library," I thought, and gave a faint tap on the window.

The window was shut, probably to stop moths, maybugs, and various other insects coming into the room from the dark garden outside. Yet a few had nevertheless managed to get through and they swarmed round the lamp, beating their wings against the globe and depositing faint yellow dust on it. From time to time Natasha raised her head from the book, shook out the pages, and looked at the window, but of course she could see nothing in the darkness. Her gaze was full of the vacant longing of a woman who has still not found what she wants in life, and I was tormented by the feeling of my obligations towards her, obligations which were as yet unfulfilled, but were at last about to be. But as I tapped on the window I saw that Natasha did not budge, no doubt taking my signals for the tiresome commotion of the insects. Then, unable to compete with the drumming of their battered wings, I decided that this was because it was all happening in a dream and Natasha couldn't hear my murmurings and my sluggish scratching on the windowpane. So I put off our meeting, climbed down from the balcony, and went home across the garden and the grass swarming with grasshoppers to the other end of the town....

The dog which my wife and I generally kept in its kennel didn't bark as I came up and I wondered whether it had perhaps died while I was away and, indeed, whether the house itself was still there and the children alive and well. But everything seemed to be just the same and on the ground floor, in the kitchen which also served as a dining-room, there was a light. My mother and father, Uncle Grisha, Aunt Sonya, and other relatives and friends whom I would never have expected to see in my house, were sitting there at a long empty table. It looked as though they were all waiting for me, and they sat there with their large, empty hands in front of them on the dining-table. When I came in, they looked up and one of them, Uncle Grisha I think, said:

"Ah, here's Vasili...."

"What does he mean—Vasili? Who do they think I am?" was the thought that went through my head, but only for a moment: 'Well, of course, that's right: Vasili! What am I thinking of!"

All the same there was something eery about this family gathering, and I asked why there was no sign of my wife and children.

"Now don't you worry," said my mother.

"Are they dead or sick? Have they been taken away?"

"No, no, they're alive and at liberty and they feel fine.... And Zhenya's such a big girl now, she's quite grown up...."

She was in a hurry to put my mind at rest, but her eagerness only made me more worried.

"Where've they got to? Why aren't they here? Tell me!"

"They're here.... Not far away.... They've gone to town.... They'll soon be back...."

"It's no good, Lizaveta!" said my father, and got up from the table. "Vasili's not a child. We don't have to treat him like a baby. We've got to tell him!"

"No, no! Wait! Let him get used to it first," said my mother excitedly.

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But my father pushed her away roughly and blurted it out:

"You see, Vasili, you're dead...."

They all looked down. It was only then that I noticed that I was standing there and talking with people who were dead, and I remembered: yes, of course! mother and father and Uncle Grisha had died ages ago, and I wanted to go back, before it was too late, to say good-bye to Natasha and explain.... But my father gripped my elbow so that it hurt and took me on one side.

"Have a smoke!" he ordered, and thrust a bedraggled packet of cigarettes under my nose.

And quietly, so that nobody could hear, he went on:

"Think of your mother's feelings and calm down. Don't you know you've been shot? Well, you were: a little while ago, just outside the town. On the road.... Why do you stare? You shouldn't have bolted like that. It's your own fault."

"But what about Natasha? When shall I see Natasha?" I shouted, and woke up in exasperation.

I STILL DON'T KNOW what this dream meant and whether it is to be taken in some higher symbolical sense or whether it means that, under the name of Vasili, I really shall have to experience that dash in the night and the fruitless visit to Natasha, who won't hear my knocking in the late hours, because by that time I shall have been shot.... And what has Pushkin got to do with it? And who is Boldyrev? And what was that book borrowed from my library by Natasha? Was it really an ancient story, or was it the story I am writing now, under a rather different title, in the hope that one day we actually will meet after all? ...

On the other hand, there was a lot in the dream which could be explained by my state of mind at the time and by my impressions of life in prison. It may well be that in my sleeping state I had simply tried to break loose, but that my wish to do so had taken on a confused form. Or it may be that my past and future got mixed up, but I shall have to wait till the time comes before I can verify the dream in practice.

But I didn't think about it like this when it was still fresh in my mind. I was goaded by the idea that Natasha escaped me every time I stretched out my arms towards her. The next morning I continued my negotiations with the Colonel, begging him to have Natasha put under arrest for her own protection—if only for twenty-four hours—preferably placing her in my cell, so we could be together as man and wife, as it were. Of course, I had to tell him everything about the time and place of the threatened danger to her life—a danger which it was the plain duty of the authorities to avert.

But, as though a little abashed by our operations over the bottle of *Ararat*, the Colonel was in an unusually sober mood.

"WHAT IS YOUR REASON," he asked, for giving such importance to an insignificant icicle? Why should your Natasha be hit on the head by a footling lump of ice? And why does it have to be the day after to-morrow, at ten o'clock of all times? ... That sort of thing doesn't happen.... I can't see any rhyme or reason in it. And you say yourself that you managed to warn her. Why on earth should she go to Gnezdnikovsky? And just at the very moment when this icicle is going to fall on her...."

"But Colonel, you don't understand women. She *will* go, she will go, as sure as eggs is eggs. Just to be awkward. She knows she shouldn't and so she'll go. Then, why is an icicle more insignificant than a bomb, or a germ, say, which is even smaller to look at? Don't you see that anything accidental is quite inevitable once it's been foretold? It's like passing sentence. You know what it's like with your tribunals: no appeal. Some people are killed by germs and others by icicles. And some while trying to escape. It's different from case to case. Strictly between you and me, we're all under sentence of death. Only we don't know the day and the hour or the other details of the execution. But I do know—I know and I'm worried sick. If only I didn't know! ..."

We argued and haggled for a whole hour before I could get him to send in a report. He wouldn't have Natasha arrested without the knowledge of his superiors and he now waited for instructions. For the next two days, however, he never left me and even had his camp bed brought to my cell.

I also took certain measures: I had the barred window completely covered over and all the clocks were removed at my request. I thought it would be better like that.

We drank and worked by electric light and, quite confused as to the time of day, we would have lunch at eight or eleven in the evening.

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Unfortunately I couldn't completely get rid of my sense of time and I could feel it growing between lunch and dinner, gradually eating into the few remaining hours left. I was also reminded of the icicle by any sausages given us with the *hors-d'œuvres*. I couldn't see it from where I was, but I could vividly picture the icy polypus, as it gained weight like a slug, its beak drooping down.

The most awful thing was that it was so unimpressive in size and shape that it gave no cause for alarm. If it had been just a little thicker and had a larger tusk it would have been spotted and destroyed long ago. At my request the Colonel had twice sent a team of civil defence workers to Gnezdnikovsky and though they searched the whole street they could find nothing. But the icicle still hung there and preyed on my mind, while all the time Natasha walked around freely out of my reach, and Colonel Tarasov's report went slowly from office to office without any visible result. In other words, it was the usual story of muddle....

LATER ON I OFTEN ASKED MYSELF what would have happened if the Colonel, in infringement of discipline, had made a decision off his own bat and ordered Natasha to be put in a safe place. What would the icicle have done then? Altogether, the whole thing was a sheer absurdity, a chain of comic circumstances each one of which was in principle avoidable. And my gift of second sight, which was the root cause of all our troubles, wasn't that some sort of mistake as well? If I hadn't quarrelled that time on the Tsvetnoi Boulevard with Natasha about snow, if the weather had been different, then none of this would have happened. But now it was all working out exactly as it was, and I was sitting here under lock and key, waiting for the end almost with impatience: get it over and done with, come on, fall! Fall and put me out of my agony!

I was tortured by the thought that nature in her cruelty, not content with the execution itself, would as a final touch make me a spectator of the scene which had been brought about by my own prediction, as though to say: "There you are! See what a good and accurate prophet you are!" And suddenly, sitting comfortably in my cell, as in a nice warm cinema, I would see Natasha toppled into the snow by a flashing, glass-like arrow, then the caretaker's wife coming out to put sand on the spot and the crowd, reluctant to disperse, looking up with awe....

But it all happened differently. We were sitting hard at work when Tarasov asked, as though for a joke:

"What do you think, will they make me a general? Or will I die in the same old rank? ..."

This was the first time he had shown any interest in what would happen to him personally, and of course I gave an encouraging reply, saying that in time he would certainly make the rank of general and perhaps something even bigger. But, answering mechanically, just to get shut of him, I started thinking about the problem seriously and before I knew it, an obscure vista unfolded before my mind's eye....

I MUST HAVE BEEN carried far into the future, and skipping a number of intermediate stages, I saw an earth which you could scarcely call by that name, it was so covered with layers of ice. I should say, however, that I use the word "ice" rather in a figurative sense, for it was still not clear of what they were made, these stalactites and stalagmites sticking up all over the place like giant icicles. Perhaps they had arisen from some petrified gas or spirit which had solidified under very high pressure, and looking at the scene, I was not even sure that I was on our planet, and not in outer space.

But by some indefinable instinct I knew with complete certainty that these shapeless objects were not made of dead matter, but were living and rational beings, artificially created and of the highest possible evolutionary type. What is more, the icicle nearest to me and the one which seemed to be in control of everything round about, was none other than Colonel Tarasov, except, of course, that he now had a different rank and another name, and bore very little resemblance to his previous self. However, there was something in the structure and behaviour of this polypus of ice—the way it filmed over with moisture, as though sweating and then again congealed in smooth, shining spirals, but most of all, the way in which it constantly grew and developed and, in doing so, bore down on neighbouring structures with its formidable spikes—in all this, I say, one sensed the erstwhile stubbornness of purpose and statesmanlike intellect of Colonel Tarasov and also the same sort of straightforward good-nature.

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Please don't misunderstand me by taking these words as some sort of innuendo, or as a trick intended, as you might say, to falsify the historical process with the ulterior motive of casting a shadow over our bright future.

"But look here!" some suspicious reader will exclaim, "Who's ever heard of such a thing? A healthy man, and a State official at that, turning into an icicle at the highest stage of development! What is one to make of it? Isn't this defamation and character-blackening?"

No, it is not, I reply firmly, and there is nothing at all to be made of it, because I'm not yet clear myself how the forces which controlled Tarasov during his existence as a colonel later assumed such a strange and novel form.

If the worst comes to the worst, and to avoid misinterpretation, I am ready to withdraw what I have said and put it down to my unbalanced state of mind. On the other hand, enough time has gone by now for me to look at the question with greater calm and objectivity and I can see nothing wrong about that stalagmatic being, which, I am deeply convinced, continued on a higher plane the great mission of my chief and protector. And although Colonel Tarasov was retired long ago, without actually getting his promotion, my promise of one was not idle talk, since I had in mind a remoter prospect beyond the limits of one human life.

The gigantic icicle revealed to me then had, I am sure, no less progressive significance than a General or even a Marshal, and if we had an Emperor it would probably even outdo him by its intelligence and all-round development, notwithstanding its lack of those clear marks of military distinction by which we are used to identify higher authority. But one has to take account of the fact that it grew up and got its education, as I have said, in totally different historical conditions and, it may well be, on a different planet, and what here seems to us an insignificant icicle may there, for all we know, be the veritable crown of the universe. In any case Colonel Tarasov's future seemed to me at the time to be bright and full of promise and I couldn't take my eyes off his smooth, icy surface, which was constantly growing new layers....

"What's wrong with you, pop-eye?" he asked with his usual racy humour.

As soon as he said these words, the icicle disappeared, as though it had melted or fallen under the table, and in its place, behind the ink-stand, his heavy, rugged figure was sitting opposite me, its same old self again. No! It wasn't the same! The fact is that the Colonel had somehow faded all of a sudden and gone haggard, as though he'd put everything he had into the icicle and was now worn out and aged by several years. I would say, even, that he was unrecognisable: a tired old man in a dirty tunic with worn cuffs, which had been let in and inexpertly mended.

But he must have a wife and children somewhere, I thought, surprised that it had never before occurred to me to wonder about the family life of this man, who seemed to be completely absorbed by matters of public importance. But I was even more astonished when, in an attempt to solve this simple problem, I found I could conjure up no picture of either the wife or the children of the Colonel, who now all at once became a complete mystery to me, though the secret was right there in his wrinkles, flabby cheeks, and frayed cuffs.

"Why are you just staring at me like that?" he said in a peeved voice, shivering slightly as though he felt cold.

"Tell me, Colonel, have you ever had a wife and children?" I asked, for want of something better to say.

BEFORE he could answer, a lieutenant dashed into the room and reported that he was wanted urgently on the telephone. They went out quickly, both of them very agitated about something, and even forgot to close the steel door.

At other times I would have raced after them in my thoughts and would have known all about it before they did. But at the moment my mind was working badly and my head was empty, and I simply didn't want to do anything. Overwhelmed by information coming in from all sides, I had been doing too much thinking all this time and I had been at it hard enough for me to sit now for a little while in peace.

So I sat and looked round the room which until quite recently had seemed too richly furnished, but which also now looked distinctly shabby and dreary. Everywhere there were holes and dust and boot-marks, and it all had the air of requisitioned stuff; a rickety plywood chair, a sofa with broken-down legs of imitation mahogany, tattered and greasy with finger-marks on the back and a brass medallion, half

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of it missing, with the head of a young lady whose nose had worn away—the kind of small-scale, grubby trash in our humdrum lives which speaks of a long period of neglect and decay....

All these details now meant very little to me and, looking at some speck of dust, which would formerly have yielded goodness knows how many terrible stories, all I thought was: "a speck of dust—well, who cares? Drift on, speck of dust!"

When the Colonel returned and haltingly told me of Natasha's death, all I asked was when it had happened.

"A quarter of an hour ago," he said, and told me briefly what he had managed to gather on the telephone from his duty officer. The duty officer, or, in plain language—the police agent—had followed Natasha at some distance and taken the exact time of the direct hit on his stop-watch: it was at ten o'clock precisely, to the minute.

The Colonel was obviously upset and, as though wishing to make up for his guilt, he loudly cursed the higher authorities who for some reason hadn't acted in time, as they should have done. I hardly listened. I wanted to go back to the icicle—not the one that killed Natasha, but the other one which promised to grow up in a million years, perhaps, after our time. I don't know what my motive was—perhaps it was a belated wish to fathom the secret of this man who was so wretched, unhappy, and mysterious in his distress. I still remembered that he could be as firm and as awe-inspiring as that icicle, but I couldn't think how this happened, and in general I couldn't picture to myself either the past or the future of this ageing and ungainly soldier with his lined face and frayed cuffs. I just couldn't get him into focus, there was nothing but bits and pieces—wrinkles, buttons....

"What are you looking at me for?" he roared, and banged his fist on the table. "You think I'm lying?... You know better than me that there was nothing I could do, nothing.... You can check up for yourself. It wasn't my fault. To-morrow we shall look into..."

"No, Colonel, to-morrow we shan't look into anything," I said, taking my eyes off his wrinkles. "Unfortunately I can't be of any further use. About a quarter of an hour ago, I lost all my powers of second sight. I don't even know whether you once had a wife, Colonel. I know nothing now. It's all over."

Epilogue

WELL, that's the end of my story, and it only remains for me to add a few words of explanation which I couldn't fit in either at the beginning or in the middle and which might be helpful to those of my readers who would like to get it all straight in their minds. But who are my readers? And who exactly am I talking to, who am I counting on in this literary exercise? I think it is mostly myself. For one thing, when you write, you have to read and re-read what you've written and so I already have one reader, thank God.

"But heavens above!" others will say, "You can't be doing all this just for yourself, sitting up at nights, not sleeping and completely wearing yourself out!"

"Just for myself," I tell them in all frankness, not for myself as I am now, but for myself as I shall be at some time in the future. Which means that anybody else—readers in the here and now—can easily join me if they wish. Because nobody knows who was who or who will be who. Perhaps you—yes, you—are me. So for the time being I have to take account of the general public, but later on we shall see.

You see what's happening all around us? A man lives on and on, but suddenly—bang!—and he's dead, then other people walk around in his place until they too are senselessly destroyed. All you hear round about is: bang, bang, bang! What's to be done? How can we fight back? This is where world literature comes in. I am convinced that most books are letters to the future with a reminder of what happened—letters "to be called for," in the absence of an exact address, retrospective attempts to re-establish links with oneself and one's former relatives and friends, who go on living and don't realise that they are missing persons.

A man disappears and you'll never find him again. He's broken up into his component parts and lost without trace in the crowd. I must get them all back, call them together again. Hey, there! Vasili! Cooey, cooey! Natasha! Where are you? Greta! Stepan Alekseyevich!! Where are you all? Hey, Clovis! Leonardo da Vinci! Answer me!

Not a sound from any of them.... Everything is empty and dead, as though I had never had those three extraordinary weeks, which were too crowded for my poor brain.

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I WAS RELEASED from prison one year and four months later. Colonel Tarasov tried hard for a long time to restore my lost powers. He even fired blank cartridges at me, suspecting sabotage. But it didn't work. Then they put me in a private sanatorium and treated me for eight months. I began to walk again.

My illness was due to a feeling of insecurity. I was afraid to move my legs in case I stumbled and fell. As one who had got used to knowing everything beforehand, I found it difficult to return to normal life with all its unforeseen events. If a doctor in a white cap came near me, my heart would beat violently. You see, I just didn't know whether he was going to take my pulse or hit me on the nose. Who could tell what was at the back of his mind?

After this I had the Colonel again. But his bad temper was gone and he was very gloomy. They'd given him hell because of me—wasting time on an obvious charlatan and falling for anti-scientific theories. The cognac we had drunk at Government expense was also held against him. The world is full of malicious people. And then times had changed. It was now 1953 and there was a general let-up. His career was finished.

Even so, we parted good friends. He asked me to let him know if ever I regained my second sight. I was also asked to sign a statement to the effect that I would not privately engage in black magic or sorcery. I readily agreed to everything.

I was forbidden to live in the capital. I settled down in the provinces near Yaroslavl, living the life of a hermit and working as a water engineer. In two years I had knocked together the necessary sum—fifteen hundred roubles—and sent it to Boris.

The money-order was returned to me. I made enquiries and found that Boris had died in February, 1954, of T.B. Who would have thought it? I didn't suspect that during our last conversation I had spoken like the oracle. But even this raving nonsense had come true....

Now, in my retreat, I mourned his premature death. He was, after all, an old friend. We might have met some time and talked about Natasha.... Of course, he had some hand in the business and was indirectly to blame.... If he hadn't denounced me then, everything would have been different. But who is without guilt?

I went to Moscow a couple of times, to look for Andryusha. But I had no luck. He must have been quite grown-up by now. I probably wouldn't have recognised him as my father—I don't mean the father who appears later in my dream, in connection with Vasili, but my real, live papa. He died when I was five years old, and he was also called Andrei. Oh, yes! I completely forgot to mention this. It was in those days, when Natasha was still alive and we were all still in Moscow. I was on my way to Boris for the money when I ran into a two-year-old boy with his nurse. Something about him caught my eye and I bent down and asked what his name was:

"Andryusha!" he replied with childish simplicity.

But his little blue eyes said very much more. They were the same blue, twinkling eyes which looked into my face in early childhood. The gaze of a wise old friend, who knows what's what. I even had the impression that he was winking at me.

"Daddy!" I whispered, so that the nurse couldn't hear, "Daddy, dear! How are you getting on? Are you all right in your new home?" Before Andryusha could reply, the nurse, a peasant woman of low intelligence, snatched him up and carried her treasure away from me. To judge by his dandy little suit, however, and his healthy, well-fed looks, he was in the hands of comfortably-off and cultured parents. I never saw him again.

QUITE RECENTLY, in the station buffet in Yaroslavl, I ran into the test-pilot I met at the New Year's party.

"You're no clairvoyant, you're a bastard! Spy! Crook!" he said, weeping drunken tears. "What do you mean by poking your nose into other people's lives? You've ruined me! Taken away my youth! If I hadn't known, it would have been all right. But look at me now! Sixty-two days to go.... Is that right? Is that right?..."

I replied coldly that I had lied to him that New Year's Eve about the rocket blowing up over the Pacific in five-and-a-half years' time. In fact, I said, nobody knows anything—he might blow up to-morrow, or, possibly, never.

"You're not lying again? Honest?" he asked, with hope in his voice. "Or you're just trying to calm me down? Well, you needn't bother. Just let me have the truth!"

He was inconsistent, the test-pilot, but I could understand his inner doubts. For three weeks in that memorable January long ago I had

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myself tried not to face the truth, until at last it caught up with me and struck me down. And now, without it, I was in a constant torment of uncertainty and would have given anything to learn the whole truth, which I had then let slip, and I prayed God for the return of my wonderful gift, which I had used so badly.

I should have been glad of my luck and done all I could to find out more exactly what I was in the past and will be in the future, whether I will ever meet Natasha and marry her, and how to put together again all the scattered fragments of life. But instead, I stupidly tried to run away from death, fearing it like a child, and then it came and parted us. Natasha's gone, and so has Susanna Ivanovna. Boris is dead, too, and the test-pilot hasn't long to go....

I don't know who it was who said: "The dead shall rise again!" Well, it's true enough. They'll rise again all right. Every day there are masses of new people in the maternity homes. But the question is: do they remember anything about themselves and about us, when they rise again? And do we recognise in our care-free children those who were once our wives and fathers? But if nobody is remembered or recognised, then nothing changes and we are parted in death by screens of oblivion. Can we afford to be so forgetful?

No! Do as you please, but until things change for the better, I shall stand by the dead. One can't leave a person in this destitute state, in this final and ultimate degradation. For who is more degraded than a dead man?

I live more and more on my memories: the Tsvetnoi Boulevard, Natasha, my little differences with Boris. What an odd fellow he was. Why couldn't he get on with me? And then Colonel Tarasov. A fine, straightforward man, Colonel Tarasov. We had good times drinking together. I haven't touched a drop of spirits since Natasha died....

But most of all I remember two episodes. Both of them are from the future. The first is in the hospital at night. Everybody's asleep and the nurse is dozing on her stool, and waiting for the moment when at long last I will let her go home to bed. I still have some time to go, and I am conscience-stricken at still being alive, when all the others are dead. It's disgraceful to go on living when all the others are dead. But there's nothing I can do about it.... And then—just the opposite—I'm standing on a balcony and beating on the lighted window together with the moths. But again I can't get through the transparent screen to the brightly-lit room inside. Natasha is alive and sits there reading a book—the very book that I have written, perhaps. And I am writing from here and trying to break in there, not knowing whether this forlorn tapping will ever be heard....

Will you hear it, Natasha? Will you read to the end, or will you give up half-way through and never know that I was so close? If only I knew! I don't know and I don't remember. I ought to tell her everything from the beginning. But it's no good. Any moment now she'll close the book. Wait just one second! The story isn't finished yet. I want to tell you one more thing, the last thing I have the strength for.... Natasha, I love you. I love you, Natasha. I love you so much, so much....

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Francis Bacon

By Hugh Trevor-Roper

IT IS A PLEASURE to think of Francis Bacon, that "magnanimous Lord Chancellor" of England who, of all men, has given most fame to the city of St. Albans. How St. Albans basked in his greatness while he lived. "When his Lordship was at his country-house at Gorhambury," writes Aubrey, the briefest, most impressionist of his biographers, "St. Albans seemed as if the court were there, so nobly did he live;" and even now, wherever we light upon him, something of this magnificence remains. *Mediocria firma* indeed! That was the motto of his family, but has any man more majestically flouted the smug doctrine of the golden mean? And yet, with all his magnificence, there was nothing bizarre or vulgar about him, as about some of those too full-blooded Elizabethans. If Bacon loved brilliance, lavishness, show, he loved also beauty, elegance, refinement. We see it in his language, in that rich yet limpid, exquisite style; we see it in the world which he created around himself: "delicate" is Aubrey's favourite word for his gardens and woods and buildings; we see it in his love of music—he had music in the next room while he meditated—and, perhaps above all, in his scrupulous sense of smell: he designed his gardens so that "the breath of flowers," blowing freely or crushed underfoot, should "come and go like the warbling of music;" in his house, all the year round, "he had his table strewed with sweet herbs and flowers" to "refresh his spirits and memory;" and "none of his servants durst appear before him without Spanish leather boots; for he would smell the neat's leather, which offended him." Even his ordinary metaphors are drawn from music and sweet smells; the subtle bonds of civil society are compared with the harmony of instrumental music, virtue with precious flowers, most fragrant when they are crushed. To the very end Bacon sustained this elaborate but fastidious magnificence. In the days of his ruin he refused to sell his majestic oak-woods: he would not sell his feathers, he said. That man, said Prince Charles—seeing him unabashed[1]—in some respects perilously unabashed—in his eclipse, "scorns to be snuffed out."

But once he was dead, how soon this material magnificence evaporated! He left his finances in such shipwreck, that his executors refused their task. The university chairs in natural science which he had endowed by his will were never founded, for lack of funds. Of his great houses, York House in the Strand, where he was born, with its costly aviaries, which he had built, became the spoil of his treacherous patron, the Duke of Buckingham. Gorhambury, which he had inherited and beautified, adding portico and terrace, statues and stained-glass windows, slid, by an uncertain process, into the hands of "a glorified caretaker," his old client and admirer, the husband of his niece, Sir Thomas Meautys. Later, Aubrey saw its gardens and groves desecrated, its Roman summer-houses defaced, "so that one would have thought the barbarians had made a conquest there." Verulam House which he had built "at immense cost," with its great carved staircase and ingenious *trompe l'oeil*, was derelict, and would be sold for £400 to two carpenters to break up. Bacon's variegated fish-ponds were "overgrown with flags

[1] Sir Simonds D'Ewes remarks with surprise, in his *Journal*, that Bacon, after his fall "would not relinquish the practice of his most horrible and secret sin of sodomy, keeping still one Godrich, a very effeminated youth, to be his catamite and bedfellow;" which, he adds, was the more remarkable since tongues began to wag "and it was thought by some that he should have been tried at the bar of justice for it, and have satisfied the law, most severe against that horrible villainy with the price of his blood"—as indeed was done, in the next and primmer reign, even by an earl and by a bishop.

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and rush," his gardens, once "a paradise," had become "a large ploughed field." Even his tomb in this church was not left unspoiled: his coffin would be pushed out to make room for a successor, not of his blood.[2]

And yet, amidst this material desolation, how Bacon's fame had grown! Within a generation of his death he was a European hero. He was Verulamius, the philosopher of St. Albans, whose works were read and revered in Sweden and Poland, Bohemia and Transylvania, and would inspire the Royal Society in England, the Académie des Sciences in France.[3] He was a historian too: his *History of the Reign of King Henry VII*, written in his eclipse, is the first work of philosophic history in our language: "it is a pity," exclaimed an admiring enemy, on first reading it, "he should have any other employment... if the rest of our history were answerable to it, I think we should not need to envy any other nation in that kind." And finally, he was seen, in retrospect, as the greatest of social and legal reformers, the man who, had he been heard, might have forestalled revolution in England. Such was his universally admitted genius that later generations have even discovered in him a remarkable, if concealed, dramatic poet: but that I think (with all respect to any of you who may hold those views) is perhaps going a little too far.

Of course there are some qualifications to be made. Everyone admits Bacon's genius but not everyone admires his character. He has been represented as a tortuous, even a treacherous politician; a flatterer of royal, even absolute power; a slippery, even a disloyal friend. If we abstract him from his own times and place him, as the Victorians too easily did, against a 19th-century background, it is easy to give colour to these charges. Bacon certainly lubricated rather than forced his way to power. "All rising to great place," he once wrote, "is by a winding stair," and since he got no help from his cousin Robert Cecil, who had his own way to wind, he attached himself to Cecil's great rival Essex and sought to wind upwards in his wake. When Essex was heading for disaster, Bacon (it can be said) nimbly deserted his patron and then—unforgettable moment—appeared in court as the accuser of his too generous, too impulsive, now fallen benefactor. Then, too, against the law of freedom, the Common Law, and its great Panjandrum, the avaricious, crabbed, cantankerous Sir Edward Coke, Bacon urged the majesty of the civil law, the law (it was said) of despotism: he would have the judges lions, but "lions under the throne." And finally, Bacon's career ended in disgrace, on a charge of receiving bribes, or at least gifts.

All these charges can be made; and yet, if we put Bacon back in his proper circumstances, how small they become! Bacon rose, as every politician rose in those days, and in many others. He followed Essex not merely as long as Essex promised success, but as long, and only as long, as his methods were legal and justifiable: it was when Essex went berserk that Bacon, after seeking vainly to reclaim, ultimately renounced his master. The "despotism" which he advocated was not absolute but carefully institutionalised, a liberal, humane, reforming royalism, far more civilised than the earthbound *meum* and *tuum* of the common lawyers. Certainly he did not believe in government without parliament: "all reformations," he told the King, "are best brought to perfection by a good correspondence between the King and his Parliament." He did not even believe in royal control of parliament. When royal officials undertook to produce, by packing, a tractable parliament, Bacon was horrified. "That private men should undertake for the Commons of England! Why a man mought as well undertake for the four elements!" These are not the words of a courtier, an absolutist, a flatterer of royal power. Nor did Bacon, for all his extravagant, sensuous tastes, misunderstand or seek to suppress the "puritan" opposition. "Let me advise you," he urged the Duke of Buckingham, "that the name of puritans in a papist's mouth do not make you withdraw your favour from such as are honest and religious men." And as for the charge of corruption, that, after all, was a charge that could always be brought, and almost always was brought, against any man whose ruin was already resolved. If all rising in the court of King James was by a winding stair, all falling was down a straight and steep one; and at the bottom of it, by 1625, lay all the greatest English statesmen of the reign.

When all the charges against Bacon have been made and examined, what remains? One thing, I think, does remain. Bacon was not treacherous,

[2] "This October 1681," writes Aubrey, "it rang all over St. Albans that Sir Harbottle Grimston, Master of the Rolls, had removed the coffin of this most renowned Lord Chancellor to make room for his own to lie in, in the vault there at St. Michael's Church." Sir Harbottle bought the Gorhambury estate from the executors of Sir Thomas Meautys. It was he who sold Verulam House to the carpenters.

[3] "*La principale occupation de cette assemblée et la plus utile,*" Christian Huyghens wrote to Colbert, who had consulted him about the programme of the Académie des Sciences, "*doit être, à mon avis, de travailler à l'histoire naturelle à peu près suivant le dessein de Verulamius.*"

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not despotic, not corrupt, but he was a cold man. Not, of course, in imagination. The man who saw myths as the warmth of life, without which men's minds were "poor shrunken things;" the man who admitted that the cold, open light of truth does not show "the masques and mummeries and triumphs of the world half so stately and daintily as candlelight;" the man who approached Nature with the intellectual pride of the Schoolman but with something of the mystical passivity of the poet, was assuredly not a dry, cold rationalist. And yet emotionally, I think, he was somewhat cold. That "delicate lively hazel eye" was described by his own doctor, the great Dr. Harvey, as "like the eye of a viper." That is what makes Bacon's contrast with Essex—the lyrical, passionate, heedless, generous, disastrous Essex—so striking. Bacon's great rival and cousin, Robert Cecil, was a cold man too. Perhaps this coldness of both Bacon and Cecil came from their mothers. Their mothers were two of the three famous Cooke sisters: formidable, dominating bluestockings, indecently learned in the ancient tongues, but not, I think, very nice. Perhaps it is not an unmixed good to have a classically-educated, bluestocking mother. At all events, the intellectual greatness of Bacon, like the political greatness of Cecil, was rendered purer (in a sense) by being unentangled by any powerful bonds, undiffused by any genial warmth, of the heart.

BUT WHAT INTELLECTUAL greatness it was! Bacon, in his own words, took all knowledge for his province. He touched no subject which he did not change. With the perfect lucidity of a great lawyer he combined—a rare combination—a forward-looking imagination. At one and the same time he could, as few other men have ever done, both in science and in politics, both analyse the old world and envisage a new.

Consider him, for instance, as a philosopher of science. Bacon was not a scientist, like his contemporaries, Galileo and Gilbert, Kepler and Tycho Brahe, and we only provoke a just retort if we pretend that he was. He was, in his own words, *buccinator temporis novi*, the trumpeter of a new age. "I hold it enough," he wrote, "to have constructed the machine, though I may not succeed in setting it on work." He saw that great scientific discoveries were possible, but that they could not be realised without a new scientific outlook. And so he urged the new outlook: an outlook which can be expressed in two words, observation and induction: observation of Nature, induction from things observed, instead of deduction from philosophical or theological presuppositions. In the study of science, wrote Bacon, "we cannot hope to succeed if we arrogantly search in the cells of the human understanding and not submissively in the wider world." Nature must be observed, with reverence, before it could be interpreted, by however powerful a mind.

What an obvious truism, we exclaim, from our safe vantage-point in time: has it not been the basis of science from Bacon's day to our own? But what a revolution it was then! All the prejudices, all the institutions of society were opposed to it. Other men had challenged that opposition in detail; but if they had sought to challenge it in general, they found that a great, sullen weight of orthodox ideology stood in their way. To move that weight, such men had felt the need of a rival ideology, and then, of course, they had found themselves in trouble. They had been branded as heretics. In Bacon's own lifetime, for holding views not very different from his, Giordano Bruno had been burnt in the Piazza dei Fiori in Rome, Vanini was burnt in the Place du Salin in Toulouse, and Campanella languished for thirty years in the dungeons of Naples. But Bacon neither languished nor burnt. Instead, he rose spirally upwards to be Lord High Chancellor of England.

How did he manage it? Largely, I think, because he was able, as few other men were—as even his own successors were not—to separate reason from ideology, from orthodoxy and heresy alike. With his serene, Olympian, disengaged intellect—that marvellous precision-instrument which moved so freely in that cool head—he detached his field of study from the established forms of religious belief, which he valued, and sought to preserve, not to destroy; for their destruction would entail the destruction of so much else. And why should they be destroyed? There was no need, he felt, to be a rebel or a heretic: historical continuity was too valuable to be sacrificed even to necessary change. Only let existing institutions make room for such change, and not crack through their own obstinacy in opposing it. To accommodate the new scientific method, let the clergy loosen their grip on matters which they did not understand; let heaven detach itself a little from earth, let us push it up a little higher, above the earth, so that we may freely observe the one and yet still revere the other; let faith separate itself from reason and leave room for mystery between: the mystery of Nature which the mind can then freely and humbly explore. As for dogma, Bacon had a saving formula for it: "the more absurd and incredible any divine mystery is, the greater honour we do to God in believing it, and so much the more noble the victory of faith." That, I am sure you will agree, is a very happy formula.

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BACON WAS NOT ONLY a great natural, he was also a great political philosopher. This is often forgotten by those who study only his own personal politics, which were agile, serpentine, and questionable. But if we study his political and legal writings, his state papers, his letters and memoranda to King James and the Duke of Buckingham, his charges to the judges, his essays—and particularly his latest essays, "of Seditions and Troubles and "of the True Greatness of Kingdoms"—we are, or should be, staggered by the brilliance of his diagnosis. In politics, in administration, in law, in the church, in society, in economy, he saw far deeper than those later and lesser reformers who, grown passionate with waiting, and blind with passion, fifteen years after his death loosed the avalanche of the Great Rebellion. In the 1630s it was his great rival Sir Edward Coke who was the legal hero of the reformers; by the 1640s, when the mere argument was over and the deep diseases of society were revealed, it was clear that it was Bacon, not Coke, who had been the real constructive reformer of state, law, and society.[4] It was not unjustly that, in the summer of 1641, that brief season in which, at last, and for the last time, solution seemed possible—that summer when the King had yielded, when Strafford had been destroyed, when peace had been made in all three kingdoms, and when Milton hailed (prematurely) "the jubilee and resurrection of the State"—almost all the works of Bacon were suddenly reprinted, and avowed disciples of Bacon were summoned to England by Parliament to lay the foundations of a new society. It was not unjustly also that the greatest of the 19th-century historians of that age, S. R. Gardiner—a man to whose Victorian, nonconformist prejudices, Bacon's tastes and morals were highly distasteful—wrote of him that:

> *to carry out his programme would have been to avert the evils of the next half-century. No one to whose mind the history of that half century is present can agree with those numerous writers who speak of Bacon's political work as inferior to his scientific. He was the one man capable of preventing a catastrophe by anticipating the demands of the age. Humanity would have been at least as much benefited if the civil war, with its attendant evils, could have been made impossible, as it was by the completion of the* Novum Organum.

[4] Mr R. W. Gibson's *Francis Bacon, A Bibliography*, shows that more of Bacon's works were published in the years 1640–41 than in all previous years since Bacon's death in 1626. For the foreign disciples of Bacon summoned to England at that time, see my article "Three Foreigners" in ENCOUNTER (February 1960).

For just as Bacon, the scientific theorist, though perfectly orthodox in religion, foresaw a new world for which the existing institutions of religion must and could make room, so in politics, though (in his own words) a "perfect and peremptory royalist," he foresaw a new society which the existing institutions of the state must and could accommodate. In fact, as we know, neither the Church nor the State responded to this persuasion. In the days of Charles I and Archbishop Laud Heaven was not pushed up higher: it was drawn down lower. Not the "new philosophy" but the great totem figure of the Schoolmen's Aristotle was set up in the universities. The old system in the state was not loosened, it was hardened into brittleness; and so, within a generation, it broke: England was overwhelmed, as Bacon also had forewarned it (and with what marvellous prophetic accuracy he had forewarned it!), by revolution. Towards their own fragmentary and distorted glimpses of the new society, lesser men hacked their blind, mistaken way.

IT IS SOMETIMES said that new societies can never be created without historical discontinuity: that conservative reform is a vain illusion, that all change requires the destruction of vested interests, which can only be violent, and that therefore revolution, whatever its cost, is necessary. Those who hold this view must regard Bacon as an ambiguous figure, a man who saw and preached a new world but insisted, illogically in their view, on enjoying all the profits and delights of the old. They will point to the contrast between the social ethos of the Roundheads, the necessary storm-troopers (as they would say) of the Baconian revolution—stiff, stodgy, pious, philistine, provincial men—and this magnificent, fastidious, sceptical spendthrift who preached it; and they will say, it is not by such men that even peaceful revolutions are carried out: that Bacon, by his courtly tastes, was too wedded to the old Jacobean world, with its abundance and abuses and aristocratic *douceur de vivre*, to be the architect of a new. To this I will only reply that I see in history no evidence for this grim theory; that England has seen many combinations of revolution and continuity; and would not the achievements of the Puritan Revolution, such as they were, have been greater if they had been achieved without that heavy price? If, instead of twenty years of blood and confusion, there had only been different bodies lying at the bottom of the steep, straight stair? If (to take one obvious instance) Ireland had been civilised, as Bacon urged, by a state-guided infusion of English capital, invested in agriculture, towns, and education, in-

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stead of by conquest, confiscation, and eviction by a new class of penurious, rat-faced English adventurers? In Ireland, wrote Bacon, time was on the English side; "His Majesty taketh no pleasure in effusion of blood or displanting of ancient generations," and there were rational, peaceful means of reclaiming "the last of the daughters of Europe from desolation and a desert (in many parts) to population and plantation, and from savage and barbarous customs to humanity and civility." I find this a better and, in the long run, a no less practical message than the bloodcurdling, sanctimonious pæans of Oliver Cromwell among the smoke and carnage of Drogheda.

However, in the short run, Bacon did not prevail, either in Ireland or in England, either in science or in politics. After his death his message, for a time, was fragmented. He had no intellectual heir. Of the young men who walked with him, taking down his aphorisms, in the "delicate groves" of Gorhambury, none continued, or in war and revolution could continue, his universal spirit. One of them, Thomas Hobbes, became the grim philosopher of counter-revolution. Rejecting altogether the Baconian belief in experience, he turned, in science, to the dogmatic certainties of mathematics, in politics to the monolithic symmetry of abstract power. Another of them, Thomas Bushell, reflected the variety of his master's inclinations in a different way. He became a brilliant company-promoter and mining-speculator, and alternated between the issue of marvellously seductive prospectuses for his uniformly disastrous projects, and retreat for Baconian meditation into remote island caves, which he tastefully furnished with skeletons, mummies, and *memento mori*. Others, I am afraid, had less edifying careers, unsuitable for discussion in this place.[5] But Bacon would not have minded. "I have no desire," he wrote, "to found a sect, after the fashion of the heresiarchs." That is why he has outlasted the founders of sects. He had no physical heir either; but that too left him unconcerned. "Surely," he once wrote, "the noblest works and foundations have proceeded from childless men, which have sought to express the images of their minds where those of their bodies have failed." The image of his mind is certainly still alive.

[5] For instance, William Lewis, whom Bacon, by exerting his full power as Lord Chancellor, forced upon Oriel College, Oxford, as provost, at the unripe age of 26. To complaints of his age, Bacon replied that minority of years was less important than majority of parts. Three years later, on Bacon's fall, Lewis fled abroad, pursued by charges of nameless vices, being, it was said, "*domini similis*." He led a shady existence as a spy in France before returning to England to be an Anglo-Catholic clergyman.

The Sapphic Moon

Seared, scarred, sealed by the Sapphic moon
Who advanced through the wavering glass
Between slats of shutters tamped
With the dry, frail dust of summer streets:
Outmoded and romantic defenses
Against the cold malignancy of the cat-goddess,
Who rips a barrier of mosquito-net contemptuously,
Passes like X-ray through lovers' caresses and arms,
Enters the womb like an instrument
Or the ice-hot hands of guilt and obsession,
Then sows bright mercury seeds of death
To blossom out through all my future days
With that pure force of life characterising her;
Like the blue flowers from the ash of Peace Square.

Ruth Fainlight

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THEATRE

Abide With Me. . . .

By Nigel Dennis

THEY COME pouring out of the past—those juicy, gruesome, and despondent messages: "Call no man happy till he dies. . . ."; "We'll *no more to the woods, the laurel trees are cut*"; "What profit hath a man of all his labour . . . ?"; "As the crackling of thorns under a pot"; "A continual dropping in a very rainy day . . ."; "All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf." To these well-deserved excitements of human desperation are added, often, their authors' immense satisfaction at the gross hopelessness of it all: the sound of the grinding is low, and lower still are fallen the daughters of musick—yet their authors are by far the lowest of the lot, continually dropping in the rainy day and divided on only one question—whether to call on the Lord for help or urge Him to let loose His firebolts and whirlwinds as quickly as possible. Let it be said frankly that the latter course was always the more honest and congenial: it was far more in tune with the baffled indignation and misanthropy that had led up to it, and there can be no doubt that if all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags they should be hygienically incinerated—smoked out, utterly destroyed, consumed, laid waste, trodden, made as dust and ashes, and other similar expungencies.

The ancients who looked for extinction with such voracity had, of course, only the Lord of Hosts to call on in the matter: when He remained supine and dilatory the human race just staggered on in their filthy rags, breeding successive generations of vipers. It can be seen that as century upon century passed with the world still showing no sign of being consumed, disappointment in the Lord's powers increased to a point where people ceased to believe in Him at all. From time to time small groups of the elect climbed mountains hopefully and waited for the flood-waters to consume the valleys: this inverted optimism is still practised by people who have not yet come to terms with scientific progress. But those of us who have, distrust absolutely the superstition of a punitive deity and wait confidently for science to succeed where He, after millenniums of heartfelt invitation and boundless opportunity, failed entirely to make a final dent. The world is still too much with us, but we shall soon enjoy a long-postponed revenge.

This point of view has always had its critics. There have always been authors who have thought that the call for human extinction was unjustified and even escapist. These authors have drawn our attention repeatedly to the extreme pleasure that may be obtained from remaining alive: there is love and courage mixed in with the filthy rags, they say; there is the way of a man with a maid; while every spring brings daffodils, every death a hope of Eternal Life (God forbid!) to come. What's more, in recent years, when the promise of extinction at last shows signs of being fulfilled, those critics have shown an indignation that is exactly proportionate to the danger. The closer we come to annihilation, the more these people feel that every author should make it his duty to be immensely encouraging about what is going to happen. In respect to the theatre, for example, they have no objection to the dramatist spending two and a half acts digging and filling a deep grave, but they are extremely angry if the curtain falls without a daffodil rising slowly from the completed mound. To be fair to these people, they do not demand a King Alfred of daffodils—any weird little thing of greenery and petals will do, so long as it indicates the opposite of what has led up to it. This pale flower is called "a note of hope" and the author who fails to provide it is a blackleg indeed.

This was not always the case. The pronounced hopelessness of the human situation was essential to the best tragedy—or, as the stage-direction put it, *"Exeunt, with a dead march."* The lesson taught by the great tragedians was never "What next?"; it was always "Too late!" Thus, Fortinbras thought that Hamlet would have made a good king, but

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he expressed no hope in the matter until Hamlet was a corpse—and even at that juncture expressed it only in order to intensify rather than reduce the painful sufferings of the audience. The good Albany, hearing the dying Lear cry "Never, never, never, never, never!" showed no indignation: he not only confirmed the multiple negative but showed its entire necessity:

> *The weight of this sad time we must obey;*
> *Speak what we feel, not what we ought to say. . . .*

Nor did this note of doom disappear when men became entirely rational. "The child is not dead, but sleepeth!" cries the dreamer when little Hedvig, that early victim of rational integrity, breathes her last; the retort: "Rubbish!" follows immediately. Similarly, there may be those whose response to the axe-blows in *The Cherry Orchard* is one of elation at the thought of what vivid bungalows may now replace Nature's fruity efforts; yet the axe is used simply because the rest is silence.

One thing, of course, *is* pleasing about the demand for a note of hope nowadays. It shows that the brotherhood of man is more extensive than was suspected—that the social realist, far from being a grim, rebellious intellectual in glasses, is just as wet as the kindly aunt who totters weekly to Boots saying: "I want a novel with a happy end, please!" This alliance is a touching one and reflects credit on our national homogeneity; but we may still object that there is something thoughtless and shallow about the man who, scorning drawing-room comedy and hungry for the raw meat of truth, rejects any reality that is too indicative of the world in which he lives. The catharsis of tragedy is not supplied by hope: it is, on the contrary, the extreme of hopelessness in tragedy that is pleasing and satisfying, answering as it does to emotions that we feel very passionately ourselves. When we have indulged them to the full, as part of our ration, we can go to the theatre next door and watch the tumblers and clowns turning these same miseries into farce: hope, if we have any, does not come to us out of the blackness of tragedy but out of the stature of the tragic and the spirited quality of the comedic. Hope, intruded deliberately and explicitly, is apt to seem what indeed it is—an apology to the effete thrown in as an afterthought, or a mere gesture of good nature which frees the tragedian from his grim mission and invites his audience to grant him sympathetic absolution for having expressed his hopelessness so clearly.

TWO WEST END revivals can help us to evaluate the current position of hope. The first is Mr. R. C. Sherriff's *The Long Sunset*, a most amiable play in which Roman landowners, long settled in Britain, see the last of their protecting legions return to Rome and must adjust themselves to the prospect of annihilation by invading barbarians. What, in truth, such Romans did in 5th-century Britain, nobody knows; but Mr. Sherriff, whose play conceals considerable scholarship, assumes that these fading Romans were not unlike certain counterparts in Gaul—Roman aristocrats turned gentleman-farmers and prepared to make a deal with one gang of barbarians in order to keep out worse gangs. The Romans of Gaul teamed up with the Goths to keep out the Vandals; Mr. Sherriff's British Romans team up with the Cornish barbarian, Arthur, to keep out the Saxons. And so, there we see our Roman selves, our togas properly adapted to the British climate, shyly parleying on the stage with the rough, red-bearded hero. We have culture but are helpless; Arthur has no culture but has Excalibur hanging from his belt. Moreover, on a small altar, a small candle burns before a small crucifix.

Mr. Sherriff, it will be seen, has moved with the times. When the last curtain fell in *Journey's End*, everything fell with it; when the last curtain falls in *The Long Sunset*, everything is due to rise again. For this reason, we enjoy his play—and find its hopefulness completely hopeless. What is Shalott to us but Guildford—and what is Guildford worth? What are swords and red beards to us; what are small candles of faith? Most hopeless of all is the fact that we are being referred back to our national infancy, cradle of days to come when we would be strong, lusty, and successful. The contrast between Arthur's success-story and our own is so striking that far from inspiring us with daffodils, it fills us with sour grapes. *The Long Sunset* is one of those plays that will be revived, one predicts, again and again. One is sorry to feel that one will not be there to see it.

THE RECENT REVIVAL of *Heartbreak House* was welcomed very warmly because the play, apart from its other virtues, ends almost simultaneously in a rain of bombs *and* a note of hope, the possibility of the latter, apparently, doing much to excuse the probability of the former, and the conjunction of the two suiting exactly the contemporary taste for impure combinations. Everybody knows that *Heartbreak House* was Shaw's "Fantasia in the Russian Manner on English Themes"; what is perhaps not quite so obvious is Shaw's clear determination to obliterate absolutely Chekhov's ghastly delicacies of tragi-comedy. The joys of *Heartbreak House* are the joys of infamous parody and absurd mimicry, and the most engaging thing about it

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is not the author's exposure of his decadent characters but his extraordinary affection for them. There is no moment in the play when we imagine for an instant that these creatures are in any way responsible for the bombs that are to fall upon them—"one might as well try to explain the Crimean War by the failings of the Pickwick Club," says the American critic, William Irvine. The fiddling that is going on while Rome is burning is being done entirely by the author: the "Fantasia" is a music of his own wits, and the arrival of the bombs serves only to bring to an end a conversation that has produced as many inconclusive suggestions as the author can invent. There was no need to provide a note of hope in a play as friendly and forgiving as this; the good nature of all the characters expresses a cheerful optimism that could hardly be carried further without becoming naif. Yet Shaw inserted two such notes. The first comes when Captain Shotover indicates that he knows the answer to our troubles; begged to provide it, he says, "Learn—*navigation!*" The second comes in the dark of the final curtain, with a flute playing bravely "Keep the home fires burning." What possible sustenance can be drawn from such irrelevancies? What *is* navigation—assuming it is not the brilliant seamanship that has kept Boss Mangan afloat? And where sweet singers from Homer to Newman have failed to improve our prospects, can we trust to Ivor Novello?

"Lead kindly light, amid the encircling gloom"—it is all very well, but the social realist should not oblige his dramatists to head torchlight processions of rationalists, nor to emit at the end of plays muted injunctions to nautical symbolism. The very essence of tragedy is doom and downfall, and we are surely not so childish as to believe that if we conclude our plays on a note of hope, we shall better our chances of survival outside the auditorium? Or is it simply that since we have become rationalists we find it superstitious to believe in doom and logical to believe in hope? Certainly, another recent revival, that of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, showed that most of the critics were too infirm and sedentary to march the long distance that separated them from classical tragedy. They were at pains to point out how very different the times were to-day—how little we believed in omens and curses, what progress our minds and institutions had made in the last few thousand years, and how well-equipped we were to master the providential problems that had worried Aeschylus. Domesticated realists to a man, they showed that though their power of fantasy could rise easily to simple, immediate catastrophes, such as train accidents and burst pipes, any fate that was ancient, stylised, impersonal, and inescapable put too much strain on the homely imagination.

The reason for this rejection of tragedy is simply that we take pride in feeling things prosaically and like our drama to be a mixture of the mundane and the mawkish. We allow hope to slip in as a highlight—which is why so many of our plays read like the hoarding which Gissing took note of in *In the Year of Jubilee*:

"Somebody's 'Blue'; somebody's 'Soap'; somebody's "High-class Jams'; and behold, inserted between the Soap and the Jam—'God so loved the world, that He gave his only-begotten Son, that whoso believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.'"

R. S. Thomas

The Visitors

Three angels came to me—
But what did they say?
I have neither the time
Nor the skill to tell you.
For if I began now
And covered many pages,
The long silence would come
Before you had learned half
Of what the first angel said,
Bending over me like a tree,
Leafy hand on my shoulder,
Whisper, as of the buds' swarm,
Teasing the strict ear.

And that was only the white angel;
There were still the two dark ones,
Invisible now, who spoke slowly,
Patient of the hand's translation,
If the fingers were not busy
With their unending report
Of what the first angel said
Between the hiving of the buds
And the mind's tasteless honey.

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NOTES & TOPICS

International Commentary

Duel with a Shadow

By Richard Lowenthal

THE WEIRD events that took place at the XXIInd Congress of the Soviet Communist Party, and the subsequent appearance of new rifts within the Sino-Soviet alliance, mark a true turning-point in the history of both the Soviet empire and the international Communist movement. Unless I totally misread the signs, they also mark a turning-point in the personal history of Nikita Sergeyevich Khrushchev—the end of his dream of achieving world hegemony by pushing the expansion of the Empire and the Movement on separate but parallel lines. It was by fulfilling that dream that he had hoped at last to outgrow the haunting shadow of Stalin—and the shadow has proved too big for him.

I am not suggesting, of course, that the party Congress brought any weakening of Khrushchev's position inside the present Soviet leadership, as some of his Western admirers seem to have feared on rather insufficient grounds. The basis for his control of party and state was solidly laid five years ago with the election of a Central Committee dominated by his nominees at the XXth Congress. Ever since he defeated his "Stalinist" rivals in the party presidium with the help of that Central Committee during the great crisis of June 1957, he has been the uncontested victor in the struggle for Stalin's succession. All that could be asked from the XXIInd Congress in that field was that it should consecrate Khrushchev's triumph by the final and formal condemnation of the "anti-party group" that had dared to lift their hands against him (there had been no opportunity for that at the extraordinary XXIst Congress of 1959, no general report of the Central Committee was rendered), and that it should make a further contribution both to the re-education of the hierarchy of party and state in a post-Stalinist spirit and to the renewal of the personnel of that hierarchy. This the Congress accomplished with dutiful unanimity and according to plan.

For there was a planned element in the proceedings which has since become known as the "second de-Stalinisation"—though in the public mind, this has by now been entirely overshadowed by the unplanned drama which was superimposed on it. As articles in the Soviet press showed on the eve of the Congress, Khrushchev intended to use it not only for a final settling of accounts with his defeated opponents, but for emphasising the principles underlying the difference between Stalin's method of government and his own. That was the meaning of the claim in the new party programme that the Soviet Union had now ceased to be a "dictatorship of the proletariat" and had become a true "people's state," accompanied by the statement (in the Congress issue of the Moscow *Communist*) that this transition might have been accomplished twenty years earlier but for Stalin's personal rule. The charge that Stalin unnecessarily perpetuated his autocratic rule at a time when all "hostile classes" had been successfully liquidated was brought not only in order to make the "democratic" merits of his successor shine all the more brightly against this dark background, but also in order to make the whole army of Soviet bureaucrats understand that the *real* change—a change *not* from dictatorship to democracy, but from mass terrorism to normality and from the whip of forced exploitation to the lure of economic incentive—was irreversible. Khrushchev has long been convinced that the modern Soviet society of to-day cannot be kept going by the same primitive and brutal methods by which its industrial apparatus was first created, and that officials who cannot or will not learn the more difficult techniques of leadership and administration required for the new stage will have to go, even if they faithfully repeat his every word. De-Stalinisation, to him, has meant chiefly that.

YET TO ACCOMPLISH these eminently reasonable and by now highly conventional objectives, it would not have been necessary to dig up the dead past in order to bury it once again. There was no need to re-tell publicly the horrible story

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of Stalin's crimes against his closest associates, to recall the killing of the flower of the Red Army on the eve of Hitler's war, to produce the evidence pointing to police connivance at the murder of Kirov which thus became the pretext for starting the trials of former leading Bolsheviks. There was no need either to remove the dead tyrant from his honoured place at Lenin's side, or to re-name the city (and even the battle) of Stalingrad. Re-training of the Soviet Communist party machine and administration required that the myth of Stalin's infallibility should be deflated, that his achievements should be placed in historical perspective. It did not require that the chief architect of the Soviet Union's present power should be publicly dragged through the blood and mud on which he built it. Nor did Khrushchev himself think so before the Congress: nothing in the preparations, nothing even in his own opening reports indicated such an intention.

This, then, was the unplanned drama of the Congress. And it arose not from the internal problems of the Soviet Union, but from the fact that the long-festering dispute with Communist China got out of hand. It started when Premier Chou En-lai, leading the Chinese delegation, reacted to the first moderate attacks on Stalin's memory by laying down a wreath at his tomb: from that moment, the transfer of the body from its showcase became inevitable. The image of the former ruler had to be spat upon because the Chinese had turned it into a banner for their attack on his heirs.

THERE is dialectical irony rather than logical necessity in the fact that the Chinese Communists should have emerged as the posthumous defenders of Stalin, to whom they owe less than any other party in the Soviet bloc. Mao had gained full control of the Chinese party only behind Stalin's back, at a moment in 1935, during the "Long March," when communications between Moscow and the Chinese Red Army were temporarily interrupted. He had used it to educate his cadres in distrust of foreign models and rejection of Stalin-type mass purges. His first "rectification of thought" of 1941 was a kind of de-Stalinisation *avant la lettre*. And he had conquered state power, not unlike Tito, *without* substantial Soviet help and only by defying Stalin's advice at the decisive moment, when he launched his final all-out offensive in the civil war.

Later, the Chinese Communists reaped substantial benefits from Stalin's death, gaining important changes in the highly unequal treaty of alliance that was the best he would grant them in 1950. It is true that they warned against the drastic form of Khrushchev's de-Stalinisation in 1956, correctly foreseeing the danger which so sudden a break in ideological continuity might spell for Soviet authority and therefore for the unity of the bloc. But it is also true that they approved the substance of Khrushchev's attempt to overcome Stalin's "great Russian chauvinism," to grant more autonomy to the satellites, and to win back the Yugoslavs. Hence during the critical period in 1956–57, when both Soviet control of Eastern Europe and Khrushchev's control of the Soviet party hung in the balance, the Chinese Communists used the full weight of their intact authority to support both.

Yet from the moment when Mao, at the Moscow international conference of November 1957, deliberately assumed the role of the most active sponsor of the unity of the bloc under Soviet leadership, he seems to have considered that this would entitle him to increased influence on Soviet policy in the future. For the first time, China had successfully intervened in the destinies of a part of Europe. Would not her continued material dependence on Soviet aid henceforth be balanced by the ideological dependence of Stalin's inexperienced successor on the proven wisdom of Mao? But Khrushchev did not see it that way. Once the acute crisis in his East European empire had been overcome with Chinese help, he felt no need for further Chinese advice on what he regarded as his own affairs. Nor was he willing to pay heed to Chinese interests where they collided with Russia's own.

IT WAS THIS SHARP DISAPPOINTMENT of Chinese hopes for increased economic, diplomatic, and military support from the Soviets that led to the first major disagreements between Mao and Khrushchev during 1958. Soviet investment in the improvement of Russian and East European conditions increased and aid-agreements designed to acquire goodwill among the uncommitted states of Asia gained in importance. But the Soviet failure to grant the massive new credits needed to tide China over the critical period of her industrialisation greatly contributed to push her into the adventure of the "great leap forward" and the imposition of "people's communes" throughout the Chinese countryside. While Khrushchev, conscious of the new relation of forces between Russia and the West that had come about with the advent of the intercontinental rocket, embarked on a world-wide offensive, he remained careful to limit the risk of an armed clash with the United States by alternating the creation of crisis with offers of summit meetings, the language of threats with that of co-existence. This caution first led him to offend Mao by temporarily

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agreeing to discuss the Middle Eastern crisis of that summer at a summit meeting called in the framework of the United Nations Security Council, and later to let him down by his refusal, during the bombardment of Quemoy, to supply him with guided missiles equivalent to those given by the Americans to Chiang's forces.

To the Chinese leaders, deprived of scope for similarly flexible tactics by their lack of diplomatic relations with the principal enemy, and deeply immersed in the efforts and sacrifices of their domestic revolutionary upheaval, the cautious egotism practised by the Soviets at their expense seemed evidence that Khrushchev and his team were sadly lacking in the spirit of international solidarity and revolutionary militancy—hence unfit for the leading role in the "socialist camp" and the international Communist movement for which Mao himself had cast them. They prepared to challenge that role by ideological arguments. By September 1958, the Chinese claim that the "people's communes" were an application of the supposed Leninist principle of "uninterrupted revolution" and a short-cut on the road from the lower "socialist" to the higher "communist" stage, implied that while the Russians were looking for comfortable resting-places on that road, the Chinese were hurrying ahead and overtaking them. In the following months, the Soviets replied with a vigorous campaign against the utopian concept of achieving full communism before a stage of economic abundance had been reached, and with developing their own concept of moving towards communism on the basis of the most developed modern technique. Under the pressure of this criticism and of the severe practical setbacks suffered by the "people's communes," this first Chinese challenge had to be withdrawn by the turn of the year. At the XXIst Congress of the C.P.S.U. in February 1959, Chou En-lai recognised that Russia alone had started on the road to the higher stage, and was rewarded by a new agreement on economic aid.

THE CONFLICT revived, however, in a more acute form in the winter of 1959–60, owing to Khrushchev's visit to Eisenhower, his summit preparations, and his hardly benevolent neutrality in China's quarrels with India and Indonesia. This time the Chinese, now thoroughly alarmed, were not content with working out a theoretical position for challenging the leading role of the Soviet Union: they were openly seeking to recruit allies within the international movement. At leadership meetings of various international front organisations (the World Peace Council, the World Trade Union Federation, the Afro-Asian Solidarity Committee, etc., as well as at a meeting of the Warsaw Pact), the Chinese criticised the Russians for their "un-Marxist" illusions about the possibility of securing peace by agreement with Eisenhower, and their "opportunist" tendency to subordinate their support of revolutionary movements and "wars of liberation" to the tactical needs of their diplomacy of coexistence. Finally, they chose the 90th anniversary of Lenin's birth in April 1960 as an occasion to publish their arguments in a whole series of articles.

The platform from which the Chinese attack was launched, of uninterrupted revolution at home and unlimited support for revolution abroad, was *Trotskyite* rather than *Stalinist* in inspiration. Yet to the Stalinist remnants in Russia and the Soviet bloc, any powerful voice that raised doubts in the Leninist orthodoxy of Khrushchev and his team must have been more than welcome. Moreover, they disliked many of the same things which were now criticised by the Chinese—Khrushchev's personal diplomacy with its necessary pretence of believing in the peaceful intentions of the other side ("whitewashing imperialism and deceiving the masses about its bellicose nature")—his wooing of "bourgeois nationalist" dictators with offers of economic aid—his "softness" towards the Yugoslav "renegades." As for the Chinese, they might hope to find truly congenial allies among Asian or Latin-American Communists thirsting for "wars of liberation"; but in Russia and Eastern Europe, the Stalinist remnants were their only hope.

In fact, it may now be regarded as proven that the alliance between the Chinese and the "Stalinists" had been formed by April 1960, if *not before*. At the XXIInd Congress Mr. Ilychev, one of the newly-promoted secretaries of the Central Committee of the C.P.S.U., disclosed that on the same occasion when the Chinese started their public campaign, the 90th anniversary of Lenin's birth, Molotov, then Soviet Ambassador in Outer Mongolia, submitted to the Moscow *Communist* an article on similar lines—a curious case of the master's spirit manifesting itself simultaneously in Peking and Ulan-Bator. Khrushchev took the point. During the next few weeks, Molotov was recalled, President Voroshilov, the last undisclosed member of the Stalinist former majority of the party presidium, was encouraged to retire from all his offices, and *Pravda* suddenly published the anti-Stalinist epic of the poet Tvardovsky.

DURING THE SAME PERIOD, the Albanian Communist leaders first showed their defiance of Khrushchev's leadership. Hoxha and Shehu, it

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may be assumed, had never wavered in their gratitude to Stalin, whom they regarded as the liberator of Albania from Yugoslav domination, and to whom they owed their personal triumph over the pro-Yugoslav group of Koci Xoxe inside the party. They had distrusted Khrushchev from the moment of his first visit to Belgrade, and had quietly and successfully resisted his efforts to rehabilitate the executed Xoxe and to change the Albanian party leadership in the interest of better relations with Yugoslavia. When, in 1958, party ties between the Soviet bloc and Yugoslavia were severed again, they had eagerly used the opportunity to denounce their arch-enemies once more as "imperialist agents," just as China did, and had been with difficulty persuaded by Khrushchev, when he visited Albania in 1959, to tone down the violence of their anti-Yugoslav campaign. But up to 1960, they had never openly and explicitly criticised the policies of Khrushchev or the decisions of the XXth Congress. Only when China started her attack on Soviet foreign policy did the Albanian Stalinists come out into the open, flatly refusing to support the proposals for an atom-free zone in the Balkans put forward on Soviet instructions by other members of the Warsaw Pact. At the Bucharest conference of ruling Communist parties in June 1960, when Khrushchev tried to force the Chinese to withdraw their criticism, the Albanians openly sided with the latter and helped them to insist on the calling of a world conference which subsequently met in Moscow.

IN RAISING their challenge to Soviet international leadership, the Chinese Communists clearly did not want to break up the alliance. They wanted more Soviet support, not less. But neither can they have expected that they would quickly or easily supplant Soviet leadership—the greater power and older authority of Moscow precluded that. They must have counted on a prolonged ideological tug-of-war, in which the alliance would continue without a clearly established leader, and Chinese influence in the world movement would gradually increase from one compromise to the next.

But if that was their aim, it seems clear in retrospect that they made any prolonged period of such "divergent unity" (in the striking phrase of Professor Brzezinski) far more difficult by their alliance with the Stalinist remnants in Russia and the Soviet bloc. Khrushchev, too, was certainly interested in maintaining the alliance and could be expected to make some concessions to Chinese pressure, as indeed he did in his behaviour on the international stage during the months preceding last winter's world conference of Communist parties, and also in some of the formulations adopted at the conference. More important, he explicitly renounced the Soviet Union's claim to its traditional "leading role" in the Communist world movement, thus recognising the limitations imposed on his international authority by Chinese opposition and the need for continued adjustment of policies to meet new situations. But he could not be expected to tolerate continued "Stalinist" defiance *within his own power sphere*.

Even before the Moscow conference, a bid to remove Hoxha from the leadership of the Albanian party had been made by pro-Soviet elements; it was forestalled by a purge of the Central Committee and arrests of important officials. After the conference, Hoxha had his policy approved by a party congress, and the arrested men were executed after a show trial for alleged conspiracy with Yugoslavia, Greece, and the United States. As these events proceeded during 1961, Moscow stepped up the pressure by stopping economic aid, cancelling credits, calling home the submarines based in Albania, and finally recalling all Soviet and Soviet bloc technicians. But a Chinese aid-agreement and Chinese technicians stepped into the breach as far as possible. The Chinese leaders thus indicated their determination not to abandon the first small European country that had sided with them—in other words, to maintain a permanent challenge to Khrushchev's authority even within his empire.

Khrushchev's public attack on Albania in his opening speech at the XXIInd Congress, and Chou En-lai's rejection of that attack must be understood in that context. The Soviet leader was not really, as has been said, making a "veiled attack on China" by criticising Albania: he was warning China that he would expel the Albanian Stalinists from the fold, whether China liked it or not—that he might tolerate prolonged differences with his Chinese ally, but not a Chinese faction within his own backyard. Chou En-lai's reply was a counter-warning that China would not accept the legitimacy of any expulsion from the "socialist camp"; and his deposition of the wreath at Stalin's tomb was an open challenge to Khrushchev's legitimacy even in Russia itself—an attempt to conjure up the ghost of the Soviet past against the Soviet present. The shadow of Stalin had suddenly come alive again, and it had assumed the features of Mao.

IT WAS AT THAT MOMENT that the quarrel got out of hand. Each side had been determined to avoid a break, but each side had counted even more on the other's need to avoid it, and on the limits that would impose on its actions.

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Each had thus more and more committed its prestige in order to impress the other and force it to retreat; and each had thereby made it increasingly difficult for itself to retreat for the sake of unity. Mao had tried to demonstrate that Khrushchev could not force an approval of his "anti-Stalinist" line, and in particular the expulsion of the Albanian leaders, on the international movement against China's will; even after the Moscow Congress, he sent the Albanians a telegram praising their "correct policy" and hailing them as close brothers within the "socialist camp." Khrushchev had tried to demonstrate that he was free to take what action he liked against the Stalinist remnants in Russia and the Soviet bloc, whether China approved it or not; in the end he had no option but to break diplomatic relations with Albania before it had been condemned by any international Communist conference—something not even Stalin had done. While the Chinese Communists were exhibiting Stalin's picture along with those of Marx, Lenin, and Mao, and while Stalin statues were falling on Khrushchev's orders all over Eastern Europe, Khrushchev found himself forced to out-Stalin Stalin in his own methods of conducting his conflict with a small Communist country.

TO UNDERSTAND the full impact of these events on Khrushchev's Russia, one has to recall the basic concept of the relations between the Soviet empire and the Communist world movement with which he set out, and its contrast to the ideas and practice of Stalin.* During a long reign in isolation Stalin had acquired the firm conviction that no progress of Communist world revolution was either likely or desirable unless it coincided with the territorial aggrandisement of the Soviet empire: the action of the Communist parties abroad had to be strictly and openly subordinated to the interests of the Soviet fatherland, because the interests of world Communism were simply identical with the growth of Soviet power. Hence while Stalin expanded the frontiers of the Soviet Union and subjected a number of neighbouring states to its control, he warned against the decisive moves of the independent Yugoslav and Chinese revolutions, and distrusted the new régimes after their victories. His rigid identification of the Communist cause with the cause of the Soviet Union made it impossible for him to recognise any independent allies, any truly equal partners within his "camp." It was this that led to his conflict with Tito, and despite his realistic caution in his dealings with China would sooner or later also have led to conflict with Mao.

* See "The Changed Antagonist," ENCOUNTER, Jan. 1961.

Khrushchev, coming to power in a very different situation, started with a much more confident view of the strength and nature of independent revolutionary forces. He drew from the Chinese experience the lesson that Communist revolutions could and would occur parallel with, but independent of, the direct increase of the power of the Soviet Union, and that they could immensely add to the total strength of the "socialist camp." He concluded that such independent revolutionary régimes would have to be treated as equal partners, and that even the satellites should be granted increased autonomy to make the rising "socialist world system" more attractive. Hence he put relations with China on a new basis in the autumn of 1954, moved for reconciliation with Tito in 1955, and proclaimed from the platform of the XXth party Congress in 1956 the doctrine that each Communist party was free to find its own road to power.

Khrushchev did not abandon this outlook even after he had used armed force to keep Hungary within the Soviet empire, and after his hope of winning Tito back as an ally had been disappointed. He made a point of preserving normal (and at times even friendly) diplomatic relations with the Yugoslav government even while attacking its "revisionist" ideas, thus underlining the difference between his methods and Stalin's. While pursuing his own imperial interests with scant attention to the complaints of his Chinese allies, he accepted their persistent nonconformity without undue irritation. Even difficult allies, to him, were primarily a source of strength.

For ultimately Khrushchev's whole vision of the world relation of forces, and of the March of History towards the world-wide victory of Communism, hinged on this belief in the fundamental harmony between the interests of the Soviet Union and the development of independent revolutionary forces all over the world. It was by the dynamics of revolution that the balance of terror between the super-powers could be most easily by-passed, and thus the actual balance of power tipped in favour of the Soviet camp without war.

It is, of course, unlikely that Khrushchev was ever so naïve as to believe in the official doctrine that no differences of interest could arise between states governed by Communist parties. But he seems to have been confident that, once the equality of the partners was recognised in principle, any differences could be adjusted without major strain because of the overriding importance of the common conflict with the non-Communist world. *What he failed to foresee* was that the very ideological tie on which he relied to ensure the adjustment might

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prevent it—by turning the limited conflict of interest into an all-out ideological struggle for leadership.

YET THIS IS WHAT has happened. The Soviet-Chinese dispute has got out of control not because the differences of interest between the two great Communist powers were unbridgeable in themselves, but because the struggle was conducted in an ideological form which came to involve the prestige of either régime to the point of no return. From the moment that the Chinese leaders allied themselves with the Stalinist remnants in Russia and the Soviet bloc, Khrushchev's imperial power was at stake. He had to choose between observing the new rules of an international movement no longer controlled by Russia alone, which meant waiting for the verdict of an international conference in which the Chinese might wield a veto power, or creating an accomplished fact by the use of Russian imperial strength. Inevitably, he chose the latter. By breaking relations with Albania without waiting for her international condemnation, he admitted that his belief in the necessary harmony of Soviet and world-Communist interests had been mistaken, and that once placed at the cross-roads Khrushchev's Russia, like Stalin's, would put her own power first.

IN ADMITTING the failure of his fundamental concept of the advance of world Communism, in accomplishing the break with Albania and accepting the risk of a break with China for the sake of Russian imperial interests, Khrushchev has, I believe, critically weakened the dynamic power of Russia's thrust towards world hegemony. He can no longer count on running the empire and the movement in double harness. He has opened the road to new and as yet unforeseeable autonomous developments in all those Communist parties that have the inner strength for a new departure. But beyond that, he has also dealt a major blow to the future of ideological party rule in Russia itself.

Just as, in the international field, Khrushchev had believed that he could promote, simultaneously and without contradiction, the progress of independent revolutionary forces and the growth of Soviet power, so he has always believed that he could work at home simultaneously for speedy economic improvement by pragmatic reforms and for the preservation of ideological party rule. As many observers have pointed out, the growth of a modern industrial society with highly educated cadres and outspoken claims for material improvement, together with the disappearance of mass terrorism from Soviet daily life, has greatly weakened the hold of the official ideology on both the masses and the intelligentsia, and even the pressure towards outward conformity. Yet Khrushchev, aware that the party régime requires the ideological vision for its legitimation, has consistently tried to counter the anti-ideological current arising "from below," from the nature of the new Soviet society, by a conscious effort at "re-ideologisation" from above. Hence his interest in a new party programme for the "transition to Communism."

YET THE BELIEF IN THE imminence of the world-wide victory of the Communist movement, and in the natural harmony of interests among all Communist parties and all governments ruled by them, is one of the main pillars of that ideological vision. The events during and after the XXIInd Congress have undermined that pillar—and that at the same moment when the renewed bitterness of the anti-Stalin campaign must have raised doubts about the essential continuity of the party's policy and principles... and also about the nature of a political system that made Stalin's crimes possible. For the thoughtful young generation of Soviet citizens in particular, the value of the party régime as guarantee of alliance with all progressive forces abroad, and as trustee for a more just and humane future at home is thus put into question all at once.

Of course, Khrushchev's own belief in the party régime will not be changed by these events, as his power is bound up with it. Nor is that power likely to be endangered while he is capable of wielding it. The story of Titoist Yugoslavia is there to remind us that a modern party monopoly, even with its international backing gone and popular belief in its ideology widely undermined, and even in the absence of Stalinist mass terrorism, may cling to power for a long time so long as its top leadership stays outwardly united under an uncontested chief. But even under that régime, the blows that have broken up its ideological crust may well prove the prelude to bolder pragmatic experimentation, particularly in the economic field, than in the past.

From a long-run point of view, Khrushchev's duel with the shadow of Stalin will leave no victor—except perhaps the people of Russia. For the Stalinist régime, the Stalinist ideological synthesis, and the Stalin image are shattered beyond repair, and Khrushchev has failed to replace them by a viable ideological synthesis of his own. The full effects of this failure may only come to the surface when the question of the future of the régime is re-opened: in the next crisis of succession.

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BOOKS & WRITERS

The Type to Which the Whole Creation Moves?

Further Thoughts on the Snow Saga — By Kathleen Nott

SIR CHARLES SNOW'S views on the Two Cultures make me wonder what sort of people he thinks people are. In his Rede lecture, he is trying to be fair to both sides. He finds writers and literary academics are on the whole more neglectful, vainly contemptuous, and generally ignorant about scientists and matters of science, than scientists are about literature and art. On the other hand, he shows that among his wide scientific acquaintance he has met a few "illiterate oafs" (as N. W. Pirie, the biologist, describes them in a review). For social morality and for practical optimism he awards higher marks to scientists than to literary people. Scientists have the tragic sense of individual existence just as much as anybody else, but he thinks they are more inclined and able to see that the world's garden has to be cultivated as well as their own, that the globe has to be cured of being poor and sick. He thinks that the way to deal with the cultural split is instructional: both cultures must be taught about each other's specialities.

It is this very objective and behaviouristic approach, combined with certain features of his later collection, the Godkin lectures, given at Harvard, and published as *Science and Government* (O.U.P., 1961) which makes me wonder whether he does not miss an essential part of the meaning of "culture": and whether indeed the underlying aim, not perhaps sufficiently reflected, is not unification but *gleichschaltung*.

To simplify the discussion let me first put what seems to me to be the opposing point of view, and then consider how far Sir Charles's views on science and the social and cultural contribution of scientists are incompatible with it. To talk about culture, if it means anything, is to talk about ways of life: therefore about real people and how they live and grow: and therefore about their spontaneous needs both imaginative and moral. In other words "culture" refers to values at least as much as to knowledge. The unification of culture is as much as anything a moral question; and in early education we need to be helped over our very old and very bad tendencies towards philistinism, and contempt of whatever the other "side" may be. This is much more important than being given a smattering of "appreciation" of other subjects which we shall forget as soon as we leave school.

If it is to be fruitful then, discussion about culture should really be about different kinds of mind or persons, as much as about different kinds of behaviour.

It might seem unfair to Sir Charles to claim that he has not given its due to moral imagination. Surely he has gone out of his way to emphasise the social urge of scientists: their characteristic concern with the priorities, the inescapable problems of hunger and disease? But the idea of moral "priorities" (very usual with sociologists) needs pondering: for the obverse of priority is just adjournment. The theory behind this idea is that when the ideological structure, whatever it is, has been moved into position, the problems of morality and art will be seen to be well on the way to solution. Historically, the connection does not seem to have been quite so automatic.

In *Science and Government* Sir Charles gives his reasons for believing that we want more scientists at every level of our administration. I do not find all his reasons either convincing or clear. Anyone, certainly, can see that we need scientists to advance and even to maintain our material and technical civilisation. But Sir Charles himself says that scientists are not necessarily good administrators. And even in technical situations which may be literally a matter of life and death for the rest of us, the chances that their judgment will be wrong seem to be about fifty-fifty. The earlier, and the best, part of *Science and Government* is an account of the battle between two views of the proper concentration of war-effort—radar *versus* strategic bombing—and of the manœuvring for prestige and power of the two men, Tizard and Linde-

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mann, who represented them. Lindemann won this battle and was proved by subsequent experience (too late for too many people) to have been wrong (here I am referring merely to his mortality-arithmetic). It is pleasant to note that this part of *Science and Government* reads like good fiction: it is perhaps not without significance, since Sir Charles has a stake in each culture, that his treatises can read like novels—and sometimes his novels like blueprints.

BUT THE STORY of wartime intrigue seems to do little to support Sir Charles's reasons for wanting more scientific underpinning of the social and administrative structure. The overriding reason is that we need, and apparently lack, "the gift of foresight." (This is a reference to the old Icelandic character, Snorri.) And like the old Men of the Sagas, we may perish if we do not develop this foresight.

Scientists, Sir Charles claims, tend to be future-directed men and to have the sense of new knowledge to come. This sounds unexceptionable; and if we agree with Sir Charles that most of our art is existential, and that it ought not to be, we can see the value of this balancing factor. (But many people think that when artists are being "existential"—that is, when they are concentrating on what they believe that they actually see—they do better than when they are being future-directed, or Utopian, unless they are being at the same time satirical.)

We must remind ourselves that, on Sir Charles's evidence, although scientists may have "the sense of new knowledge to come," they are not always good at making use of it and that, although when they have the foresight, their experience tends to bring it out, "most scientists possess nothing of this foresight."

Sir Charles puts forward some imaginary heckling against his own case, which can be summarised as follows: Should not the future bring some limit to the pursuit of affluence and material possessions? And should not keeping the peace have the highest priority (or, *Should the future be there?*). He replies that he is "familiar with those questions"—and has some sympathy with some of them, and also that "There is a lot of truth in some of them": but that we must not "shrug off our sense of the future."

IN A MORAL and imaginative sense, however, what is the future to be about? And what is the human contribution of scientists to be if their traditional values of scientific integrity and freedom are to be prevented from functioning fully, as seems to be the case? For example:

> In more liberal days . . . scientists tended to assume . . . that science could only flourish in the free air. I wish it were so. [But] unfortunately, the constraints of secrecy, though they disturb the comparative judgment, do not disturb the scientific process.

Surely this is of practical as well as of moral importance?

Let us admit that Sir Charles has seen more than most people of the actual behaviour of men on mixed scientific and political committees. It still looks as if he has had an attack of Establishment True-Blues: that he is taking an excessively cowed and fatalistic view of our existing administrative and social structure and of its power and right of stifling principle and courageous criticism. There is a difference between the Laws of the Medes and Persians and the Laws of Nature.

In *Science and Government*, after the excellent narrative description of the battle of Tizard and Lindemann, we are given a neat summary of the actual types and relations of governmental committees: followed by the remark that this structure

> is independent of the objectives, which may be good or bad: it is simply the way men have to operate, in order to get anything done at all. . . . So far as I have been able to observe anything, this is how the world ticks—not only our world, but also the future world one can imagine, juster and more sensible than ours.

How has Sir Charles been able to "observe" this future world? And if we must all, scientists, politicians, and the rest of us, accept this committee-man's doom-laden morality, and not prepare for a better future by the exercise of moral judgment and evaluation in the present, how can he think that there is any chance that it will be "juster and more sensible than ours"? Does not the future, if any, depend on what we think is worth while now? (Sir Charles himself wonders whether he is "becoming . . . too much in love with an old country's predilection for checks and balances.")

BUT "this is the way the world ticks"—and in the same paragraph there is evidence that Sir Charles thinks we must not only take it but like it: for he continues that his view of *Realpolitik* is not meant as Satire. *Satire is cheek*, he informs us. This odd remark is accorded a footnote which does not wholly illuminate it. It was contributed by Lady Snow, and Sir Charles adds that it seems to him truer the more he thinks about it. Satire "is the revenge of those who cannot really comprehend the world or cope with it."

Satire is cheek: one imagines the lurking shade of Voltaire and a brisk schoolmasterly

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MUGGERIDGE: *Now, Charles, you, because you're a scientist [I was trained as a scientist, but have not been one in a professional sense for a long time.—C. P. S.], you have this idea, as I understand from your writings, that one of the failings of our sort of society is that the people who exercise authority, we'll say Parliament and so on, are singularly unversed in scientific matters.*

SNOW: *Yes, I think this is a terrible weakness of the whole of Western society, and one that we're not going to get out of without immense trouble and pain.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Do you mean by that that, for instance, an M.P. would be a better M.P. if he knew a bit about science?*

SNOW: *I think some M.P.s ought to know a bit about science. They'd be better M.P.s in the area where scientific insight becomes important. And there are quite a number of such areas.*

MUGGERIDGE: *What worries me about it is this that, as I understand contemporary science, there are very, very few great experts, and the rest of us could only at best hope to have a smattering.*

SNOW: *But we could have a smattering in the same sense that a large number of Members of Parliament have some smattering of, say, law or economics, and it would be extremely valuable if some had that same smattering of natural science.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Yes, I'm trying to rack my brains now to think of politicians who've had a bit of science and the only one that occurs to my mind is the derisory figure of Ramsay MacDonald. Hadn't he been trained in Chemistry?*

SNOW: *I think he may have been. Cripps, you know, had been trained in Chemistry, and, in fact, did a small amount of research and so, very oddly, did John Anderson, Lord Waverley.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Did he?*

SNOW: *Yes. There are a few of them.*

MUGGERIDGE: *I didn't know that. But . . .*

SNOW: *But may I give an example why I think it's important? The whole of what we can think of loosely as the Western authorities, the people in power, made a fatal decision in 1945, or a decision so nearly fatal that it's going to take us a long time to recover from it—that, in fact, they would have such a predominance of power through nuclear weapons that they needn't take any other kind of weapons very seriously. The whole of Western strategy was based upon these great big bombs, and that was strengthened slightly when the thermonuclear bomb came along. If, in fact, there'd been any adequate number of scientists in governing circles at that time those decisions could simply not have been made —because everyone knew, who had any kind of scientific foresight, that this monopoly was a very temporary thing, a matter of a few years at the very most. That would have altered the major strategic decision without any question.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Of course it seems extraordinary that nobody told them that.*

SNOW: *They were told. But I mean to say it was the sort of thing that people who have not got science in their bones find extraordinarily hard to believe.*

MUGGERIDGE: *I must say, on your side, one of the most extraordinary statements in this extraordinary age that I've ever heard was when Earl Attlee said about the atomic bomb that when the decision was taken to drop it no one had ever mentioned the word "fall-out" to him.*

SNOW: *Yes, it is. As you know, I was there when that was said, and I just almost fell off my chair.*

MUGGERIDGE: *It's astounding.*

SNOW: *Yes.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Now you feel that this would be corrected if, in the ranks of Parliament, there were a certain number of people who were versed sufficiently in all this?*

SNOW: *Well, I won't say it would be corrected, but it would stand some chance of being corrected. We shouldn't have the same certainty of error. We should at least have a possible chance. . . .*

MUGGERIDGE: *Of course they would only be people who knew very, very little, wouldn't they? Because isn't it true of science that now to know really anything about a subject it's a kind of lifelong . . .*

SNOW: *Well, not quite. If it were as customary to do a degree in science as it is in, say, classics or history, and then go a little beyond that, you'd have people who would have every chance of making decent scientific judgments.*

*

MUGGERIDGE: *One of the most fascinating things you wrote, in my opinion, was the account of the row between Lindemann and Tizard. Rows are interesting, aren't they?*

SNOW: *Rows are interesting, yes, and this was a classic row.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Now the net or moral of this row was that we must have more scientists around in important positions, and Alan Taylor, I thought not unreasonably, said—well, if these two are the chaps we're going to get, let's have less.*

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SNOW: *The joke is against me there, I accept. I chuckled when I read Taylor's review, and of course the point is well taken and true. Yet I don't budge from my essential point. Let's forget the row, which really was picturesque but not fundamentally significant. I still think that if we got the scientists, not engaged in rows, in our governmental areas, that they would provide foresight that most of us don't possess.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Of course Lindemann, I suppose, had, at one point, a stronger position than any man of science has ever had.*

SNOW: *He must have been the most powerful scientist that has ever lived, yes, must have been.*

MUGGERIDGE: *And, as I understand your account of it, in some ways this was for ill, not for good.*

SNOW: *Yes, I think, I think many people would say that.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Now how are we to protect ourselves against that?*

SNOW: *I think there we're all clear, or any of us who've thought of it, it's very bad to have one person of scientific ability in a group with no one else of scientific ability or knowledge. That is, one scientific overlord is very dangerous.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Because he might be wrong.*

*

MUGGERIDGE: *Now, Charles, you are, obviously, less like a Communist than most people one could meet, being an intensely individualistic person, and yet, in a way, I notice that you've become a bit of a hero in the Soviet Union.*

SNOW: *Yes, that is so.* [*This sounds intolerably immodest, in cold blood. I meant that I was one of the Western writers of whom they might have heard.*—C. P. S.]

MUGGERIDGE: *I mean....*

SNOW: *No, that is so, no.*

MUGGERIDGE: *I mean it in no derogatory sense—*

SNOW: *No.*

MUGGERIDGE: *—but merely that you are one of the people for whom they have great regard.*

SNOW: *Yes.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Now how do you account for that?*

SNOW: *I think they know that I'm very fond of them. I love Russians, by and large. Saying you love a country is, of course, ridiculous, but I love most of the Russians I know. I'm very interested in what they're doing, and I think they would feel, and I hope it's true, that I'm more detached, more anxious to find out how it really works and not how it's supposed to work than most people from the West.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Do they publish your books?*

SNOW: *Yes.*

MUGGERIDGE: *And enjoy them?*

SNOW: *Yes.*

MUGGERIDGE: *At least read them.*

SNOW: *So they say!*

MUGGERIDGE: *So they say! Yes. In other words, it's rather interesting that the Soviet Union, in this sense, has changed, that whereas before its favourite people were, more or less, avowed Communist writers.*

SNOW: *Yes.*

MUGGERIDGE: *This seems to, as far as outside Russia is concerned, this seems to, would you agree that this has changed a little?*

SNOW: *Oh, that is changing pretty rapidly. It's changing, not very rapidly, but at a considerable pace. You see, Graham Greene is very well known in Russia, and Graham is no more a Communist than....*

MUGGERIDGE: *He's certainly not, certainly not.*

SNOW: *And it's interesting that a Catholic writer, even in his Catholic books, gets a good deal of interest and attention. Cronin, of all extraordinary people, of course—*

MUGGERIDGE: *Really!*

SNOW: *—is the most popular writer, most popular* foreign *writer, of the Soviet Union.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Extraordinary!*

SNOW: *That I've never got any Russian to explain to me, but it is true.*

MUGGERIDGE: *How extraordinary! They're all translated into Russian.*

SNOW: *Yes, yes. And they are, they are making a very serious attempt, now, to translate most people whom they think reach a high standard, a highish standard, who are not actually, in their sense, really hostile. That is they wouldn't publish people whom they would call Fascists.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Mm.*

SNOW: *That would certainly be true. But that said, I think they're in many ways much more open-minded than we are.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Could you imagine yourself living happily in a Communist society?*

SNOW: *I think so. It would depend a bit on what I, on my particular profession. You mean me as....*

MUGGERIDGE: *Yes, you as you.*

SNOW: *You mean me as me.*

MUGGERIDGE: *You, writer-scientist.*

SNOW: *Yes, I think so. There are certain things which I should find a considerable constraint, but many things which I should deeply value. I mean the intensity of the moral life in Russia, for instance, is a thing which I do value.*

→

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MUGGERIDGE: *If you had to, if somebody said you've got to live in America or live in Russia for the rest of your days, I mean supposing it so happened, which would you choose?*

SNOW: *Well, that is very difficult. You see I happen to love America and know it rather unusually well for an Englishman. As you know, the last year I spent much more than half my time there, and so much of the American life I know is enormously attractive. For instance, I love their passion for ideas, just as I love the Russian passion for ideas, and, of course, there is the great advantage that in America you're talking in your own language, and in Russia you're not, which would be a serious point in favour of America. But I think, to be honest, I could be very happy in either of them.*

MUGGERIDGE: *You wouldn't be worried by the various arrangements whereby certain books, certain ideas must not be propounded. I mean we'll take a simple thing like Lysenko, or something like that, that wouldn't really worry you?*

SNOW: *Oh, I should be worried, but then almost every Russian I know is worried.*

MUGGERIDGE: *But you think you could make....*

SNOW: *I think....*

MUGGERIDGE: *... make terms with that?*

SNOW: *Well, I should be constantly cross, but remember I'm constantly cross with various aspects of my own society.*

MUGGERIDGE: *You regard being constantly cross as a sort of normal condition.*

SNOW: *... oppressed irascibility anyway. I don't think that would worry me. I think what would worry me a good deal would be that I should find my painting friends having to do their real stuff on the side and produce rather bad academy pictures to make a living. That is the kind of thing which worries a great many sophisticated and intelligent Russians.*

MUGGERIDGE: *How Left would you regard yourself politically, Charles, in terms of our set-up here?*

SNOW: *Well, I think the word's almost ceased to have meaning in our set-up here, hasn't it? I mean it's perfectly reasonable to be a Conservative in the present flavour of the Conservative Party (of the front bench of the Conservative Party at least), or a member of the Labour front bench, and there's almost nothing between it. For certain things I believe, as a matter of fact, that the Conservative Party could have done and in some ways have done slightly better than the Labour Party would have done for ten years.*

MUGGERIDGE: *But you haven't, in the context of this country, got any very strong political feeling?*

SNOW: *No, not in the context of this country, no. In a sort of world context, certainly yes. That is, I am strongly for the poor. I mean I've never forgotten that I was poor. It seems to me that a world where one-third is living pretty nicely and two-thirds are half-hungry and dying much too early—that's a condition which none of us can take complacently, indeed none of us ought to take at all.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Do you think we could cope with that, do you think we could correct that?*

SNOW: *It's perfectly within man's power to correct it, if only Russia and America were not quarrelling.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Are they going to go on quarrelling?*

SNOW: *I believe not, but on that I'm more optimistic than most people. There are so many forces making for a détente that I believe, in spite of all the evidence, that it's likely to happen.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Would you agree with me that these two régimes, which are normally accepted as representing the two opposites, on examination, have enormous points in common?*

SNOW: *Oh, anyone who has lived in those two countries knows that. We've both spent some time in both, and that is a thing which just hits you in the eye.*

MUGGERIDGE: *That is exactly what I feel. I feel that if these two countries go to war it'll be a unique war in history because they'll be going to war about the same thing.*

SNOW: *That...*

MUGGERIDGE: *I mean...*

SNOW: *They're both ideological. They're both enormous societies. They've both had a frontier within quite a recent time. They've got the same delightful qualities in many ways, a much greater directness, for instance, than we have, on the whole, a much more spontaneous response to life. All that I think is true.*

MUGGERIDGE: *So that the weird thing is that as political tension mounts the similarity becomes more marked.*

SNOW: *Yes. It is a love-hate relation.*

MUGGERIDGE: *And d'you think they'll ever, love will ever emerge?*

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SNOW: *I think there's not much hope for, at least our part of the world, the whole of the northern hemisphere, unless it does emerge. Of course the stakes now are pretty high.*

MUGGERIDGE: *What are they?*

SNOW: *Well the stakes are roughly some sort of patched-up friendship or annihilation for this country. And by annihilation I'm not using a figure of speech. I mean annihilation for us, and very serious destruction for both America and Russia.*

MUGGERIDGE: *I mean you, as a scientist, take the view of the more alarmist people about what nuclear warfare would mean.*

SNOW: *No, I didn't say there's going to be a nuclear war.*

MUGGERIDGE: *No, but I mean if there were.*

SNOW: *If there were a nuclear war, the damage that can be done to Russia and America is, I think, slightly exaggerated. I believe that with all the resources of destruction that they both have they probably couldn't kill off more than perhaps a quarter of each other's population. But, this country seems to me in a unique, and not enviable, position, that of all the countries in the world we should really lose perhaps ninety per cent of our population. That wouldn't be true of France and Germany. We're just a supply base, not easily captured by ordinary conventional troops, and any just straight military thinking would require that we were put out of action.*

*

MUGGERIDGE: *One of the things that you stirred up waters over, very interestingly, was this business of "the two cultures," the scientific culture and the humanistic culture. What I couldn't understand is exactly how you could have an educational system which would eliminate this difference.*

SNOW: *You wouldn't eliminate it, but you could very seriously mediate between the two. Indeed, some countries, remember, make a much better attempt than we do at that. England is a very bad example because of our intense specialisation, which, again, goes back to our élite education, that is educating largely a class élite, which has been the pattern until quite recent times. But go to a good Hungarian high school, for instance, or a good Central European high school anywhere, and you'll find people educated very seriously in both sides, both these so-called two cultures, until they're 18 or 19, and people like Koestler and Polanyi and John von Neumann and some of the most brilliant intellects in the world have come out of just that education.*

MUGGERIDGE: *What is culture, Charles?*

SNOW: *No, I . . .*

MUGGERIDGE: *It's a hard one to suddenly spring on you.*

SNOW: *It's a very hard one. Well, it means a number of things. It means having some kind of conception of the works of God and man, as it were, the natural world and the world of men, and the works of art and technology that men have made, I think that's all part of it. Mr. Eliot's* Notes Towards the Definition of Culture, *for instance, wouldn't take me very far.*

MUGGERIDGE: *You mean they got towards, but they didn't get there.*

SNOW: *Yes.*

MUGGERIDGE: *I was thinking of it very simply—I see mankind as pigs eating in a trough and every now and again a pig lifts up its head, and I think the lifting up of the head is culture. Would you accept that?*

SNOW: *That's a very nice figure, that's a very nice figure.*

MUGGERIDGE: *Because you've got to eat, haven't you, you've got to have your head in the trough?*

SNOW: *Certainly.*

MUGGERIDGE: *You know, and that's all power and ambition.*

SNOW: *Certainly, certainly.*

MUGGERIDGE: *And all these things are there.*

SNOW: *Certainly, certainly.*

MUGGERIDGE: *But the pig occasionally lifts up its head—*

SNOW: *Yes.*

MUGGERIDGE: *—and that lifting up of the head is culture.*

SNOW: *Yes, and on the other hand if you ignore the existence of the trough, so to speak, then your culture gets completely unreal.*

MUGGERIDGE: *And then you get mandarin.*

SNOW: *You get mandarin culture. . . .*

MUGGERIDGE: *Which is fatal.*

SNOW: *That's fatal.*

MUGGERIDGE: *So I think we're rather in agreement on that.*

SNOW: *We are on that, without a doubt, we are on that.*

Extract from transcript of Granada T.V.'s recent "*Appointment with C. P. Snow*".

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request to him to take his tongue out of his cheek and his hands out of his pockets. And yet since there are few literary contributions which people find more enjoyable, one cannot help asking what is wrong with satire. In fact the satirist is the imaginative moral critic who says in effect: *This may be how men are and how they behave, but I will never surrender the hope that they might be better, less stupid, more willing to mature.*

Far from being cheeky (by which I suppose Sir Charles means arrogant, holier-than-thou, hypocritically detached from common human weakness), the satirist often satirises himself (anyway by implication), for his theme is *hubris*, and his method is a logical reduction to absurdity: an examination, that is, of the logical implications of certain beliefs or attitudes—*Candide* is a good example. So is it the matter or the manner of satire which is the trouble? that it is critical at all, or that it is rude and funny? If the latter, logically we must wipe out wit and comedy too: a poor look-out for the Other Culture.

IT SEEMS LIKELY, especially if we compare his views with those of Dr. Bronowski, that Sir Charles has underestimated the probable moral and imaginative contribution of the higher-order scientific mind to cultural development. While Dr. Bronowski shares Sir Charles's opinion that literary people tend to be both ignorant and philistine towards the sciences, he is very much further removed from the view that being able to discuss the Second Law of Thermodynamics or effecting some change on the purely instructional level, are the most important needs. He understands, much more profoundly I should say, that a fundamental unification of cultural outlook is what is wanted: and that the connective tissue is made of language and concept: so that poetry, not visible in Sir Charles's picture, is strictly relevant.

In *Science and Human Values* (Hutchinson), particularly, he shows that he is concerned with moral and imaginative attitudes, which may be common to scientists, artists, and ordinary men. The scientist's Truth is a moral and social value. The supporting reason is that scientific verification relies on a form of social co-operation which no scientific worker can withhold from others. What is important here is that the genuine scientist, like the artist, stands for a kind of moral and imaginative mind which, for quite realistic reasons, implies a certain kind of integrity. Whether Dr. Bronowski has committed himself or not to definite statements on the issue, this belief in scientific integrity is not really compatible with the lighter view—put forward in *Science and Government* (already referred to)—about scientific responsibility towards the nationalistic demand for secrecy. Dr. Bronowski sees, in short, that the scientist ought to be, not a power-auxiliary, but an adult moral influence. His job is not to "govern" society: "his duty is to teach it the implications and the values in his work." In Sir Charles's novels, where he has given us a detailed account of scientists as he has observed them, the picture is very different from Dr. Bronowski's. The fatalistic morality seems to be paramount, and the "corridors of power" seem to have turned into Hampton Court maze.

Sir Charles is fascinated by the relations of intrigue and power in scientific and academic life. In spite of the fact, or maybe because of it, that petty competition takes up a great deal of their time, compared with the problems of the outer human world, or even of their scientific work, the scientists do not often enough appear as solid and quirky moral beings. It is true that Sir Charles gives his scientists problems of social morality to bite upon which, in themselves, must seem to many of us of genuine importance. For example, what should be done about dropping the bomb they have spent the war making, or the problem of secrecy as posed by patriotic commitment (*The New Men*); or the problem of scientific integrity (*The Affair*)?

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But this reads generally like a paper-discussion: and weight for weight, the characters are in too much of a tizzy about where their next honour is coming from. It is instructive to follow the careers of one or two of the Snow-Saga men between *The Masters* and *The New Men*, via *The Affair*. Walter Luke, for one, a tough-spoken young prole boffin-Fellow (hardly ever with less than four letters to his name, or blanks, anyway, for Sir Charles is delicate about this) has moved, by way of bomb-research and radiation-sickness, to his knighthood. Nightingale, whom in *The Masters* nobody could endure, a lonely bachelor reduced to spinsterish spite through having wandered up the wrong power-corridors, has not indeed achieved either a title, nor the F.R.S. which has haunted him for years, but at least he has a wartime gong and the college bursary, plus, what nobody could have foreseen, a highly satisfactory wife. (For, if his characters have missed the honorific bus, Sir Charles will sometimes reward them himself, after we have given up all hope, with a psychological boost.) And lots of "bright young men have made their reputation."

But the characters seldom have real insides or real and convincing passions: and one wonders whether the narrator-device which Lewis Eliot provides, is, not so much a convenient god's eye view, as a way of dodging the problems of subjectivity, a reversal that is of our whole artistic development, towards a more primitive or juvenile concern with "humours" or the kind of personage one meets in a morality-play.

The abstract and passionless quality reminds one more than anything of Science Fiction or the best quality Whodunnit—without the thrills. In fact, after reading a good deal of Sir Charles's fiction, one is driven to ponder on Dr. Leavis's insistence on "relevant life," and the serious novelist's duty to surround his characters with it.

WHAT IS THE LIFE indeed with which Sir Charles surrounds his boffins, arts men, and bureaucrats? They marry—often difficult wives, who are of course a drag upon them—and they reproduce themselves. But apart from waiting for their honours, which do not always arrive, and having fights on committees, they spend an unconscionable time cultivating their taste in wine (correctly, one hopes) and "presenting bottles" at college do's. Even with a war on they don't seem to have enough to occupy them—Sir Charles cannot find anything for Luke to do while his nuclear research is held up, except play the piano badly.

All this Sir Charles views with avuncular affection, or sometimes the doom-laden conception of human nature which makes one think

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of Wynwood Reade and the *Martyrdom of Man*. *Es muss sein*: we have to surrender any belief or hope that men might grow up, and become less petty and stupid: and no one must shoot at anyone for, especially the scientists, they are all doing their best.

As far as committee-fights are concerned, I expect that Sir Charles knows what he is talking about, and that in the novels he gives a fair statistical sample; but there are limits to the fictional excitement this can provide. Moreover it seems that "life," and therefore "culture," is and always has been in good part about something else: about the subjective moral struggle, the inward battle to become a person, to grow up and unify oneself. It does not matter if this has been a record of failure (as in tragedy): it is what has been found interesting and significant, and there seems to be no satisfactory substitute. Poets and artists anyway have always known this: and so I am sure have many scientists. But I cannot think that the boffin as depicted by Sir Charles is the type to which the whole creation moves.

Even if his picture, or rather diagram, of the status-struck scientific world, is accurate, the best treatment of this adolescent situation might well have been *satirical*.

There are indeed incidents and comments in the novels which serious novelists (those who take, not themselves, but our moral life seriously) could hardly treat in any other way: and these incidents and comments are part of his whole moral structure.

In *The New Men*, Lewis Eliot, having a night out at "Pratt's" with a distinguished Civil Servant, thought of

> ... my mother. She had been brought up in a gamekeeper's cottage on a Lincolnshire estate ... she was dead years since, she had not seen what happened to me—but just the sight of me with Thomas Bevill, in his most jealously guarded club, eating with men whose names she had read in the papers, would have made her rejoice that her life was not in vain.

One would like to offer a prize for treatment of this paragraph in the style, say, of Somerset Maugham, Graham Greene, Angus Wilson, or a number of other writers as widely different. Tender amusement at human foibles might not be missing, but satire, in most cases, would be part of immediate observation. But Eliot—or Sir Charles—looks at the picture as pleased as Punch—or Mum herself.

Or take another paragraph, from *The Affair*. Here the new Mrs. Eliot,

> even after marrying me, and meeting my colleagues, and getting a spectator's view of the snakes and ladders of power ... could not quite credit it. Her grandfather and great-uncle had resigned fellowships over the Thirty-Nine Articles ... they had both been men of independent means.... She could not sympathise with the shifts, the calculations, the self-seeking of men making their way.

This looks like a gross libel on the many poor men throughout history who have thought that being self-made means making one's Self: and that the lower kinds of contemporary conformity are always a challenge to resistance. Does Sir Charles mean that only the Rich can afford a Conscience? Or that the spiritual reward of striving poor men is to wear a boiled shirt in the moral desert?

We all suffer from snobbery, often from inverted snobbery and, at least intermittently, from the itch for power and security in any form we can grab. But irony or satire is the natural, if not the only way, to point the contrast between the trivial and intriguing side of human nature and its other real potentialities.

"Satire is cheek" ought to be seen in connection with that Future which so deeply concerns Sir Charles. The satirist often casts his fable in a futuristic form but if he is an artistic moralist, he does this, less because he is thinking about the future as it may actually turn out, than because he is using the possible or imaginary

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(New Statesman)

GOLLANCZ

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future as a conveniently clear and abstract metaphor to illustrate human nature and behaviour as it is in our present. An active and dramatic portrayal of our characteristic foibles, self-deceptions, egoistic anxieties, and greed, especially if it appeals to laughter, is a well-tested way of trying to influence and strengthen our moral choices, so that the future may not be empty of moral content. Sir Charles complains of George Orwell that he was one who more than most "wished that the future should not exist." But the future does *not* exist—yet. Orwell may not have liked the look of the kind of moral and imaginative future for which mankind seems to be bound: but he was more concerned with warning than wishing.

In the context, not only of *Science and Government* but of Sir Charles's whole output to date, *Satire is Cheek* is an integral statement: proposing that we should accept uncritically a view of human moral capacity at its pettiest level. It might be that events will seem to justify this view. But one may think that in a cultural and moral sense, Sir Charles is indulging in that "re-writing of history" which also caused misgivings to Orwell. The most creative minds, religious, artistic, and scientific, have gone to work on the contrary assumptions—that human minds have the chance to grow up into freedom and independence, and out of their most grossly materialistic preoccupations: that this is what human existence is about: and also that it will be a continuing battle, not only against the deliberate enslavers, but against the moral anæsthetists who believe in Original Helplessness: or maybe in Aboriginal Sheepishness.

Tragic Ends

The Death of Tragedy. By GEORGE STEINER. *Faber*, 30s.

THIS is a well-written, well-informed, and (in short space) an opulent book, and even those who reject its main thesis must certainly prize it for the inset estimates of particular dramatists. These appear to be written from an inexhaustible knowledge of European drama, yet at the same time with all the gusto of a young theatre-goer. That on Corneille is perhaps the best; that on Byron's plays the most unexpected. But the author is far too good a critic to make novelty his aim. Where there is nothing both new and true to be said, as on Racine, he is content to say well what most of us already thought.

The discussion of verse in chapter seven is almost equally good. Almost, but not, I think, quite. I welcome Mr. Steiner's rejection of the false poetics with which critics and poets have been infected ever since Wordsworth wrote his

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disastrous passage about diction in the preface to *Lyrical Ballads*. But I think he sees only half the truth. He sees the distancing and exalting power of verse; but he seems to ignore the equal appropriateness of verse—though, to be sure, a very different sort of verse—to the coarsest humour. Some lyrics in Aristophanes, many epigrams of Martial, many lewd limericks of our own day, come to mind. The truth seems to be that as verse in tragedy makes splendid what in prose would be sheerly painful, so bawdy verse makes brisk and sportive what, without it, would be sheerly hateful. Again, in a later passage, where Mr. Steiner very justly praises the quality of Yeats's blank verse, I question whether his quotation really illustrates it. The last two lines of it, with their artfully simple syntax and their extremely regular iambic movement, seem to me to show Yeats in one of his unusual Tennysonian moments.

A few details are open to dispute. On p. 11 the letter to Can Grande is attributed to Dante; I believe most scholars now think it spurious. And don't we know something more about the Athenian audience than Mr. Steiner allows on p. 114? Surely Aristotle says somewhere that the Many are good judges of plays? On p. 320 Milton's refusal to choose between Ptolemy and Copernicus is described as "a gesture both serene and sorrowful." I suggest we should rather emphasise the amazing ingenuity whereby Milton exploits the poetic possibilities of both, evoking by his Chaos all the agoraphobia and bewilderment of "outer space" but also giving us "hanging in a golden chain" a finite, illuminated universe which, if imperfectly Ptolemaic, is as much a *kosmos*, an artefact, as Ptolemy's. On the credit side there are felicities enough to fill this review with quotations. Dryden working over Shakespeare is like "a skilful transcription for piano of a complete orchestral score"... "the stricter a style, the more communicative is any departure from its severity"... drama involves "a miracle of controlled self-destruction." But it is time to turn to Mr. Steiner's real theme. If I express mainly my dissents, that is by way of "opening the discussion." I don't doubt that if he had me in the room Mr. Steiner could produce satisfactory answers to some of them and interesting answers to all.

He says at the outset that when we say "tragic drama" we know "not exactly but well enough" what we mean. What he clearly means is a play with an unhappy ending, arising out of the assertion that "necessity is blind" in which "the vengeful spite or injustice of the gods" somehow "hallows the sufferer." He has every right to define tragedy thus if he pleases. But he seems also to think that his concept of tragedy covers all the works usually called tragedies, as if it had been reached by induction: "the word *tragedy* encloses in a single span both the Greek and the Elizabethan example." But does it, as defined by him? He is well aware that we have a happy ending in the *Eumenides* and something like one in the *Oedipus at Colonus*: but the short paragraph in which he attempts to discount these as special cases did not convince me. If we had more complete trilogies such endings would, I suspect, turn up more often: we know that the Promethean trilogy ended in reconciliation. Even among extant plays we have happy endings in the *Philoctetes* and the *Iphigenia in Tauris*. And what of such French plays as *Le Cid* or *Esther*?

The moral I would draw is that *tragedy*, taken as a common essence of which all "tragedies" are instances, is a phantom concept. They share a common name for historical reasons; as the Postlethwaits are all so called not because they all exhibit a common character of Postlethwaiticity, but in virtue of their genetic connections. An Athenian knew whether the play he had seen was or was not a "tragedy" by far coarser and more objective criteria than ours; more as a modern man knows whether he has been watching rugger or soccer.

And in plays with an unhappy ending do we always find the "hallowing effect"? Who is hallowed in the *Agamemnon*, the *Medea*, *Macbeth*, or *Phèdre*? Is the hallowing indisputably present anywhere except in *Oedipus at Colonus* and *Lear*?

An even more disquieting question rises in my mind. Is such hallowing a usual, or frequent, result of undeserved and irreparable disaster in the real world? And if it is not, what claim has the art which depicts it to be a specially "stark insight into human life"? Can we wholly avoid the suspicion that tragedy as Mr. Steiner conceives it, is our final attempt "to see the world as the world's not"?

THE PURPOSE of the book is to account for the decay of the tragic drama. The author sees clearly that it has flourished only in a few periods, so that its existence, not its absence, is what really "calls for particular note." That being so, to account for its absence from any particular age seems a strange enterprise—like asking why some particular man is not six feet tall, or a champion sprinter. You could answer it only if you knew why anybody was, and then it would answer itself. But this objection is merely technical. If you explain the absence, you will, by implication, have explained the presence. If Mr. Steiner can show why tragedy died we shall know why it ever lived.

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The best of Mr. Steiner's explanations, to my mind, turns on the loss of an accepted, and highly imaginative, *Weltanschauung* once common to the dramatist and his whole audience. This has no doubt raised difficulties for all poetry; but most acutely for the most public forms, epic and drama. I would even like to add a buttress to Mr. Steiner's view. He wisely admits opera as, in some sort, the 19th-century successor to, or usurper of, the tragic stage. Is it not then highly significant that we find the nearest approach to great tragedy in the first three parts of *The Ring* which do really embody something like a widely accepted myth —the philosophy of Keats's Oceanus, the vague evolutionism or developmentalism for which Darwin was later to supply the scientific superstructure? By the tragedy I here mean the tragedy of Wotan who "rises to the height of willing his own downfall." (In *Götterdämmerung*, recasting old work, Wagner relapses both dramatically and musically into his earlier and far inferior manner.)

I am rather less convinced by the role which Mr. Steiner attributes to the French Revolution, conceived as "a triumph of the militant *bourgeoisie*—with its lack of literary background and its taste for pathos and happy endings." Many aristocrats have lacked, many *bourgeois* have had, a literary background. Courtly romance, no less than popular melodrama, is full of pathos and happy endings. There is some danger of making "the rise of the middle classes" a maid of all work. I have hardly ever read a historical book which did not begin by telling me that in the period under consideration this ill-defined class was rising into new importance. Mysterious body, which appears to have been always rising, and working all evil by its rise, up to the very moment when I was born into it!

Mr. Steiner also suggests that "the middle-class spectator" in the revolutionary period wanted escapism in the theatre because the real world was then giving him "a surfeit and tumult of emotion." "After the great levies had marched and retreated across Europe, the ancient balance between public and private life had altered." But does this apply to England? There, surely, no class shared less in these marches and retreats than the *bourgeoisie* or viewed them with greater phlegm? I doubt, furthermore, whether "surfeit and tumult of emotion" were so absent from the audience at the Globe. In every age the most private life will often be surfeited with emotion; and the Elizabethans lived under the permanent fear of hell-fire, witches, plagues, a second Armada, and a disputed succession with a consequent civil war.

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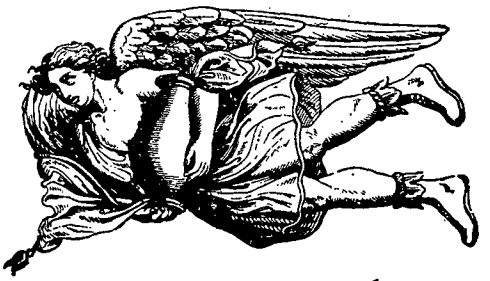

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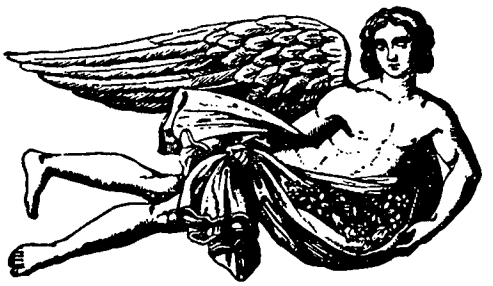

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Mr. Steiner is good on the ambivalent relations between Romanticism and tragedy. He sees in the Romantics, on the one hand, an "impulse towards drama." But he also sees that the essentially lyrical and egocentric character of Romanticism was inevitably fatal to "the controlled self-destruction" which drama demands ("Falstaff lives because he is not Shakespeare"). I could wish, however, that he had not, without qualification, connected Romanticism with Revolution as a liberation from reason. It was not for nothing that the Revolution made Reason a goddess. It attacked the *ancien régime* not only for iniquities but for "absurdities" (as the author agrees on p. 125). The "reason" from which Wordsworth records his liberation in *The Prelude* is not that of Descartes but that of Godwin.

Once, and I think once only, Mr. Steiner is misled into blurring a point by the incisiveness of his own style. In distinguishing "near-tragedy"—drama that ends, like *Faust* or *Peer Gynt* with some sort of redemption—he says "near-tragedy is, in fact, another word for melodrama." He may or may not be right. But the trouble is that "melodrama" is more a pejorative than a descriptive term. And I suggest, as a fundamental canon of exposition, that a distinction of kinds should never be thus combined with a judgment of comparative value. This always weakens it and distracts our attention. If you say, "This is not port but sherry," you speak to the purpose. If you say, "This is not port, but the vile drink sherry," you have introduced a red herring. Tell us afterwards how you dislike sherry, but don't mix this up with the distinction.

It would even be argued that when we are discussing the death of tragedy the term *melodrama* needs to be defined with especial care. I rather suspect that an extreme sensitivity to the charge of melodrama, felt by poet, actor, and spectator alike, may be one symptom of an ethos which renders tragedy impossible. The flamboyant gesture, the uninhibited emotion fully articulated in eloquent speech, are suspect. They were first driven away by the Victorian ideal of the Strong Silent Man and the Stiff Upper Lip, and the collapse of that ideal into mere cynicism has banished them still further. Irony and suspicion have suffered a hypertrophy. Tragedy is certainly a very different thing from melodrama; but I doubt whether those who are not prepared to risk the one can ever make, act, or fully enjoy the other. We might perhaps describe melodrama as "the tragic in exile." It is what happens to certain elements of tragedy when they are rejected by cultured people and abandoned to the masses.

C. S. Lewis

LETTERS

Bert Brecht

MAY I MAKE some comments on Mr. Esslin's article [ENCOUNTER, November], "Brecht: Poems and Unpoems"?

1. The first two volumes of Brecht's *Poems*, he says, "show evidence of politically motivated tampering." The only evidence he quotes is the "Hymn of the Red Army Soldier," whose omission from the reprint of *Hauspostille* was already dealt with at some length in his book.

2. There is an editorial note in the first volume, not mentioned by Mr. Esslin, saying that Brecht decided to suppress this poem soon after *Hauspostille* was first published in 1927. Personally I think his executors should have ignored this wish, but it is ridiculous to call it "surprising" when they do not. Mr. Esslin's dark hints of dirty work in the rearrangement of the volume are unsupported by any evidence, and seem to me very wide of the mark.

3. *Galileo* was translated in full by Mr. Vesey because the executors would not give permission for the incomplete Laughton-Brecht translation to be printed with additions, as now proposed by Mr. Esslin. Messrs. Methuen, intermittently advised by myself, thought it essential to have the full text. Professor Bentley in his *Seven Plays by Bertolt Brecht* (which gets Mr. Esslin's unqualified blessing) does not; nor does he print the notes to which Mr. Esslin devoted a good part of his previous ENCOUNTER article.

4. I have heard the term *Versuchehefte* used by Brecht's own collaborators, though of course it is technically incorrect. I don't myself use it; however, if we are going to be so weightily punctilious ("shows a regrettable unfamiliarity with Brecht's work," etc.) then let us have Bertolt spelt properly (footnote to p. 91 of Mr. Esslin's article), and the right title "Gesang des Soldaten der roten [not Roten] Armee" on page 92.

5. I expect to see a withdrawal of the suggestion that because Messrs. Methuen chose not to include any of the earlier and less well-known plays in their first volume there is "evidence . . . of political control from a distance." There is neither reason nor excuse for this stupid remark. Methuens were (and are) entitled to use any play they want apart from unfinished and unpublished works. What Mr. Esslin calls "Brecht's earlier (and, from a Communist point of view, unacceptable) plays" are in fact published in East as well as West Germany; the French edition, having progressed rather further than the English, includes them too. Your contributor is certainly aware of this.

6. True: I wasn't intending to include Brecht's brief reference to "Malenkov's concept of the typical," or the fourteen-line fragment in which it occurs, in my edition of his writings on the theatre, since this will not be a straight translation of *Schriften zum Theater* but a new and fuller selec-

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tion made by myself. There is really no more to the reference than that one phrase, but if anybody feels anxious about it perhaps he will look it up and let me know if he disagrees.

7. May we look forward to another of Mr. Esslin's annual articles on its omission? Or might you, Sir, now decide to rescue Brecht from the mud of "the Other Shore" and treat him as a subject for criticism rather than polemic?

JOHN WILLETT

London

I HAD THOUGHT that I was attacking the obscurantists in East Berlin, so I can't quite see why Mr. Willett feels aggrieved. But in any case, as far as I can judge, his protest lacks any substance whatever.

1. Mr. Willett concedes that the omission of the "Hymn of the Red Army Soldier" does show evidence of politically motivated tampering in what claims to be a complete edition of his poems. That I had also commented in my book on the omission of the poem from the reprint of *Hauspostille*, in Brecht's own lifetime, is no reason whatever that I should refrain from drawing attention to its omission from an edition of the *complete* poems which expressly claims that it includes poems omitted from the *Hauspostille* on Brecht's own editorial initiative.

If the omission of this, as your readers will have been able to judge for themselves, important and beautiful poem was the only evidence I mentioned in my article, this was merely because I did not want to bore them with long and tedious textual details. But as Mr. Willett is not satisfied, here are some other facts which prove politically motivated tampering. Walter Nubel's bibliography lists six poems written by Brecht between December 1914 and August 1915 and published in an Augsburg paper. They have titles like "German Spring Prayer," "The Ensign," "The Belgian Field," "The Tsingtau Soldier," and thus are clearly youthful patriotic effusions of a schoolboy in the first flush of the First World War. They have not been omitted as mere juvenilia as the volume concerned opens with poems dated even earlier. Why were they left out of an edition which claims to be complete? Because they would have revealed that at the age of sixteen Brecht still supported the Kaiser's War? Their omission certainly does appear to be a piece of "politically motivated tampering." Moreover, omissions do not tell the whole story. There are also a good many instances of cut poems, changed titles, publication of the politically more convenient versions of poems which exist in several variants, etc. As a writer in the *Times Literary Supplement* said (April 14th, 1961): "Any informed reader is bound to wonder why (these poems) have been left out and how much unpublished work may have been overlooked in the same way."

The third and fourth volumes of the "complete" poems have appeared since my article was written. They fully confirm the suspicions aroused by the first two. Here, again, important poems published in periodicals within the period covered have been omitted (*e.g.*, Brecht's beautiful and moving poem addressed to Karl Kraus, contained in a volume printed in 1934 as a tribute from his friends). Others appear in mutilated form (*e.g.*, "Oh Fallada, die du hangest," which is shorn of no fewer than 26 lines out of the total of 54 which it had when it was published in *Die Weltbuehne* in January 1933). Others again appear in the (to East German Communists) politically more acceptable versions: thus the line of the poem on New York, "*Verschollener* Ruhm der Riesenstadt New York," which, in the first published version ran: "Truly their system of society was the best possible!" is here printed in the notoriously bad text of *Hundert Gedichte* (1951) where it has been mitigated to "... their system of society was incomparable!"

2. All this, in an edition claiming to be complete and representative, *does* appear surprising to me. I can see nothing ridiculous in my attitude.

3. Galileo: I cannot see how a reviewer can take into account what happened behind the scenes prior to publication of a volume. He can only judge the finished book. Hence Mr. Willett's argument may *explain why* the book did not turn out as well as it was intended. *I* could merely say that it had not turned out as well as I had expected.

3. Versuchehefte. This is a grammatical monstrosity in German. It is impossible as a word formation and not only "technically incorrect." Nor did its technical incorrectness (which shows lack of knowledge of German) give rise to my comment about its showing unfamiliarity with Brecht's work; this was based on my expectation that people working on an edition of Brecht's works should have been familiar with the correct title of one of his principal publications.

4. Mr. Willett expects me to withdraw a remark I did not make. I never accused Messrs. Methuen of any desire to exclude any of Brecht's plays from their edition. Quite the contrary. I wrote: "One must sympathise with the difficulties encountered by Brecht's publishers in the West" caused by the fears of Brecht's executors that they might arouse the anger of the totalitarian régime under which they carry on their important and impressive work. Mr. Willett himself refutes his own contention that the publishers are operating in complete freedom by his remark under (3) that "the executors would not give permission for the Laughton/Brecht translation to be printed with additions." So the executors do interfere in the work of publishers in the West (as is their right). As the edition in question lacks any statement of the plan or policy behind it and the choice and arrangement of plays in it is puzzling (to say the least), and as anyone who has ever applied for permission to translate or perform the early plays in this country can testify that permission is often withheld on the ground that the executors would prefer not to introduce Brecht by one of his "unrepresentative" works, the inference that such considerations on the part of the *executors in East Berlin* might have been one of the causes of this puzzling selection seems legitimate enough. No reflection on the politics of the British publishers is contained in what I have written, nor was any such reflection intended.

5. The matter is quite different with regard to the passage in *Schriften zum Theater* in which Brecht quoted Malenkov as an authority for his

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views on socialist realism. I *wondered* whether it would be included in the English edition of the book. Mr. Willett now announces that he will omit it. I am very glad to learn, and prepared to believe him, that he did this quite spontaneously. Yet it seems an odd coincidence that the same passage has been omitted in the second printing of the West German edition too. It seems even odder that a translator who was negotiating about an edition of the book has been told that this passage would *have to be omitted*. If Mr. Willett is as anxious as he appears to be to submit this passage in all its harmlessness (and it is indeed as harmless as could be—but very interesting and significant, nevertheless) to the open judgment of all comers, I think he should include it—all fourteen lines of it—in his forthcoming edition!

If so, I shall be the first to congratulate him in my next "annual article" on happenings on the turbulent Brecht front.

MARTIN ESSLIN

London

Colin MacInnes & the Book Trade

I AM VERY MUCH in favour of "wild glances" at the Book Trade, for they sometimes alight on points which those of us who have been maintaining a steady stare for years tend to miss. Any degree of light upon its complexities, any hint of a solution to some of its problems is assured of a welcome and an appraisal. It is always a little easy to claim that the trade in which one is personally involved is "unique," but I think that in the case of the book trade this is true. In my view it is not much good equating it with other trades—even one so apparently close as the record industry. The book trade demands what might be called an intensity of consumer participation which is not equalled by any other. The book trade is not in fact one trade but many trades. Each broad category of books is certainly a distinct and separate trade, and it can reasonably be argued that each new book—of any creative purpose or pretension—constitutes a little trade of itself, and requires the same considerations that many manufacturers give to the marketing of the one article which can set the pattern of a business for months ahead.

Colin MacInnes in his "wild glance" concerns himself chiefly, and I think rightly, with the home trade of "general" publishing as we call it here, or "trade" publishing as they call it in America. It is the other aspects of the trade, educational books, textbooks, technical books, and the like which are responsible for the deceptive air of development and prosperity which has proved so alluring to the City in this country and to Wall Street in America. There are certain indications that all is not so happy even before the honeymoon is over.

The "general" book trade is not, in my view, in at all a healthy plight and there would seem to be two main reasons. The first is the preposterous over-production of new titles in editions whose economic minimum printing is around four times what it needed to be before the war, even at much increased prices. The available market is simply unable to assimilate so profuse a deluge. The second reason is not so much the competition of other attractions, as the encroachment upon available time. I do not myself think that we can any longer hope that people will read more; what we have to contrive is that more people will read. And not only read but that young people in particular should come to regard a small, changing collection of books in their homes as much a part of its equipment as the wireless or the "telly," or a collection of "pop" records.

If we can approach the problem from this viewpoint we find that television, for example, becomes our chief ally and not our chief competitor. Television certainly competes for time, but I think it very much encourages reading and I am sure that those who are engaged upon the business of broadcasting are as anxious as any of us for a healthy book trade. They, with us, are dependent upon a literate public able to understand the meaning of words.

The problem surely is that books are comparatively "difficult" and require an effort of will and a degree of concentration which neither a pop record nor even the most serious of television programmes need demand.

All this I think lends point to what Mr. MacInnes has to say. We must somehow attract a new public to the reading and buying of books. Most of us would agree with his strictures on our bookshops. Indeed I once made many of the suggestions he now makes in a paper to the Booksellers Association. It is not conducive to high spirits when our leading firm of multiple booksellers announces a scheme for the sale of socks, shirts, and ties. The difficulty is that the book trade is much undercapitalised, particularly on the retail side. Mr. MacInnes and others tend to assume that publishers possess endless resources of cash which they can tip into the re-equipment and rejuvenation of bookshops up and down the land. The fact is that such resources are not there or are otherwise employed. However I do believe with Mr. MacInnes that publishers will tend to move in, and already Messrs Collins control Hatchards and a consortium of publishers Messrs. Bumpus.

Certainly the book trade is not so complacent as Mr. MacInnes would think, although complacency may here and there exist. The next years will be difficult and for some they may be catastrophic. But I believe that developing factors will bring about beneficial changes. In the first place, new techniques of production should make their contribution towards a better "package appeal" and will make economically possible the production of small editions. Secondly, I am sure that our retail trade will somehow evolve to align itself with the requirements of the time, however beastly these may prove to be. I think too, that on the publishing side, young men—and women—will in time rebel against the present departmentalism inevitable in an era of take-overs and integration and break away to become the new Capes and the new Fabers and the new Gollanczs of the future.

ROBERT LUSTY,
Chairman

Messrs. Hutchinson,
London

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THERE ARE SOME parallels between Colin MacInnes' article and one which I contributed to *The Bookseller* on 9th October under the title, "Fundamentals of Selling," and in which I wrote:

> Sir Simon Marks would scarce find one good marketing man among the lot of us.... Books are not necessary? The highest successes that modern promotion methods have achieved have been to persuade a large section of the population that certain commodities are necessary to their civilised well-being.... Publishers are probably the only producers of [luxury or semi-luxury] commodities alive to-day who have utterly and lamentably failed to endeavour to sell them as such.... We have been told that national book campaigns are beyond the means of the trade overall and in place of book promotion we have a weekly series of strangled announcements (some with quite appalling typography) which publishers are pleased to call advertisements, and which many of the public either never notice or still confuse with editorial matter....

Mr. MacInnes is right in suggesting that many British booksellers are unable to find the capital to produce the sort of shops they would (in fact) like to have. Booksellers are not, as he opines, "thoroughly defeatist." If they were, on to-day's niggardly margins, few would even remain open and dedicated to their jobs, as they are. I will not, however, encroach upon your space to meet those of Mr. MacInnes' points which close and intimate experience in bookselling would show to be untenable. In the main, as I have indicated above, I agree with him that the problem of promoting and selling books *qua* books is a national one to be dealt with on a national basis. As to the physical organisation of bookshops, this must clearly relate to the type of clientèle one hopes, desires, and endeavours to attract. A repetition of bookshops throughout Britain all looking rather like shaved-down Marks & Spencers (for whom I have infinite respect) is in truth a rather appalling prospect and one which would drive many types of customers I know not where.

The one major quarrel I have with Mr. MacInnes is in his tendency to wild generalisation: "decrepit sales machinery ... optimistic ignorance ... total lack of style, alertness, or enthusiasm," and so on. May I therefore quietly murmur in the interests of fact that within the course of 1961 alone, Bumpus at least has (a) installed a permanent, semi-mobile window display which boldly (and tastefully) features four books a month of our own choosing; (b) opened a paperbacks lounge which we believe to be one of the best (poor old word!) in the country; (c) inaugurated a Birthday Club for children; and (d) opened a fairly-well-advertised subscription account scheme which is attracting many new customers who would not have wished to open a normal charge account. And as for "large sensational photographs," may I say that we have currently on display one of the largest that it is possible to get into the shop.

GORDON GRIMLEY
Managing Director.

Bumpus Books,
London

AUTHORS

Max Hayward *writes*: "At the end of his article *On Socialist Realism* Abram Tertz wrote: 'Right now I put my hope in a phantasmagoric art, with hypotheses instead of a Purpose, an art in which the grotesque will replace realistic descriptions of ordinary life. Such an art would correspond best to the spirit of our time. May the fantastic imagery of Hoffmann and Dostoevski, of Goya, Chagall, and Mayakovski (the most socialist realist of all), and of many other realists and non-realists teach us how to be truthful with the aid of the absurd and the fantastic.'

"Tertz has already illustrated his point in *The Trial Begins* [ENCOUNTER, January 1960]. But in his new collection of five *Fantastic Tales*, of which *The Icicle* is the most considerable, he has taken it a stage further and created a unique style which owes as much to surrealist painting as it does to any literary predecessors. The present story employs what must be a rare device. The story purports to be written as a kind of message by the author to himself in a future incarnation and to the girl-friend killed in this, partly as the result of the hero's sudden and disconcerting acquisition of the power of second sight on New Year's Eve. We ordinary readers are involved only in so far as any one of us might share in the author's reincarnation, or in some way assist in his search for Natasha....

"In this collection of new stories Tertz is more concerned with abnormal psychology than with politics, as he was in *The Trial Begins* (another story, *You and I*, for instance, is a fascinating study in paranoia), but he cannot help giving vent to his scorn for ideological trumpery....

"One word of warning: earnest believers in the transmigration of souls should beware of using *The Icicle* as a text...." Copyright: Institut Littéraire, Maisons Lafitte, France (first published in "Fantasticzeskije Soczinnieniya").

John Sparrow is Warden of All Souls, Oxford. He was called to the Bar (Middle Temple, 1931), but has ceased to practise law since his present appointment in 1952.

Index to Volume XVII

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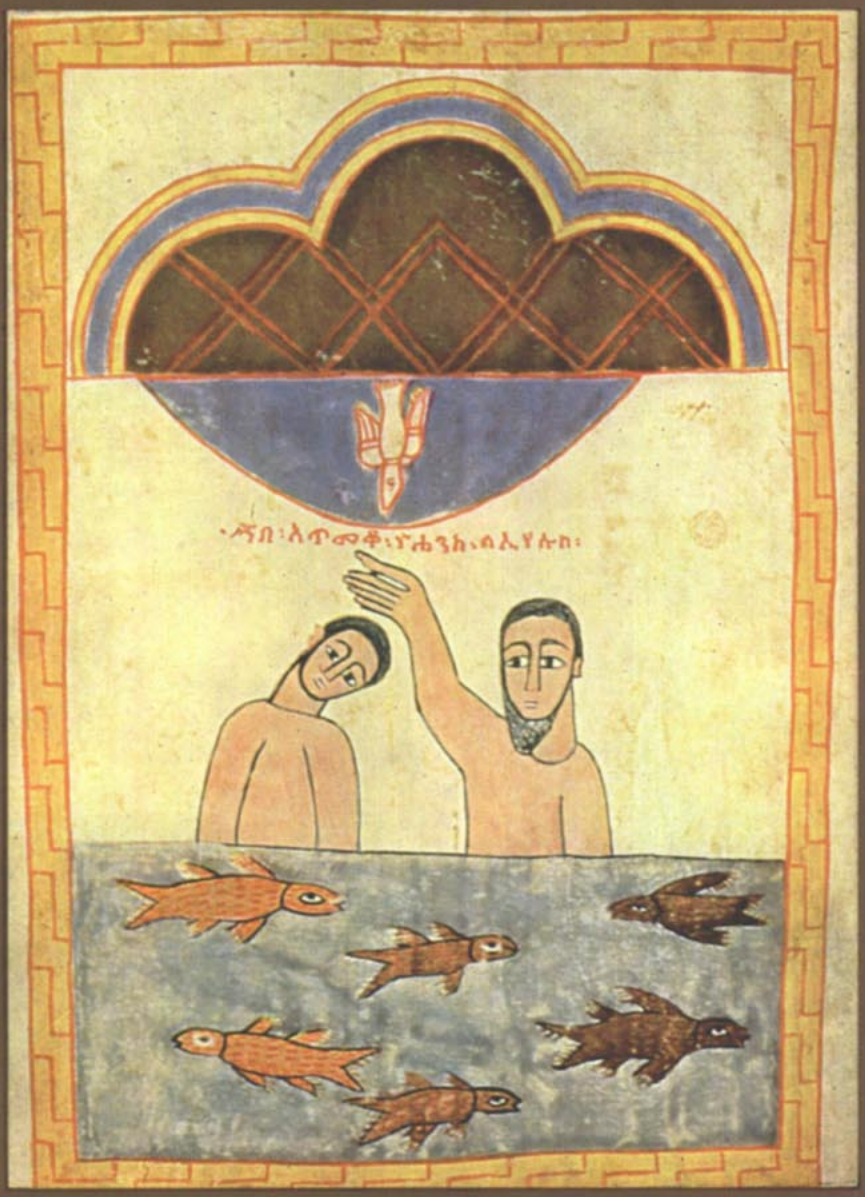

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